NUMBER NINE JOY STREET

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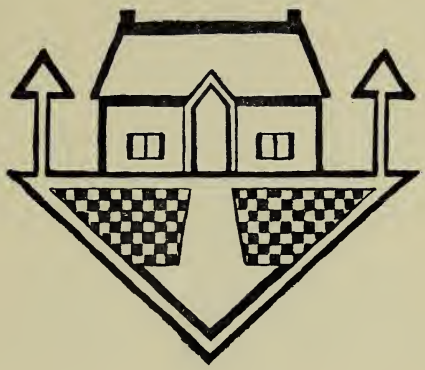
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NUMBER NINE JOY STREET





To
the children
of Parents
who know what is good for them!

Number Nine Joy Street

A Medley of Prose & Verse for Boys and Girls

EDITED BY MICHAEL LYNN

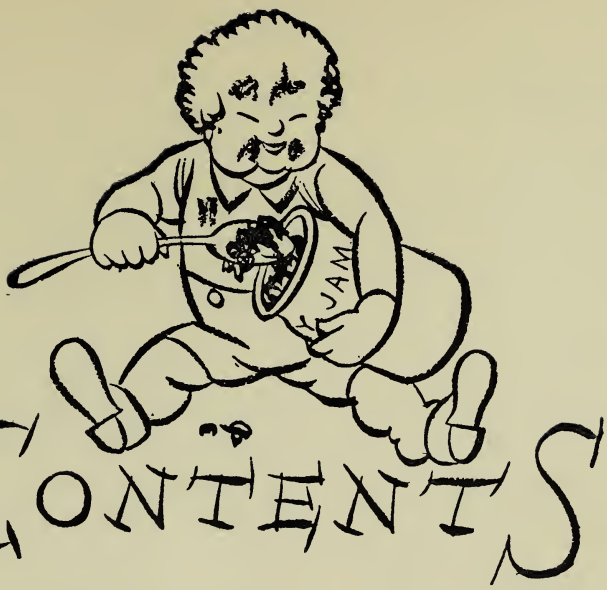
LAURENCE HOUSMAN
COMPTON MACKENZIE
ALGERNON BLACKWOOD
L. A. G. STRONG
ROY MELDRUM
THE NIGHTINGALES
THOMAS DERRICK
MABEL MARLOWE
J. H. and RUTH MACNAIR
HUGH CHESTERMAN
L. R. BRIGHTWELL



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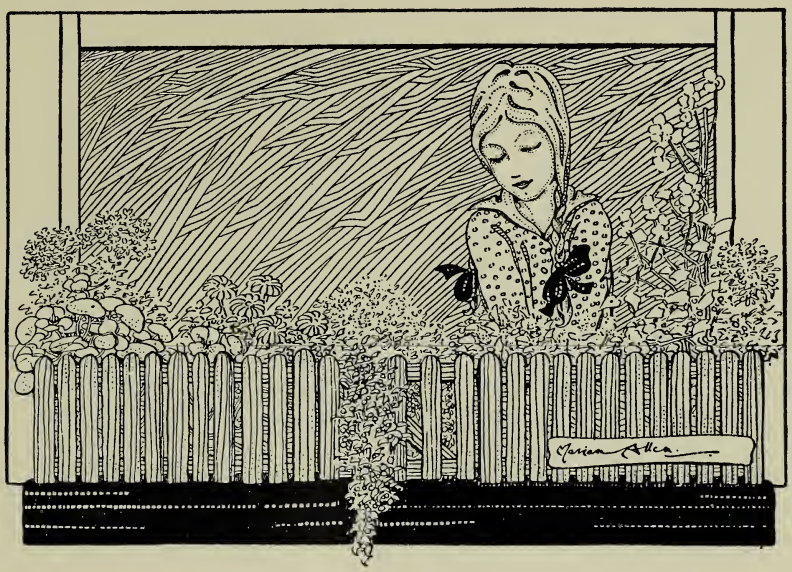
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NUMBER NINE JOY STREET



THE FAIRY IN THE WINDOW-BOX

By COMPTON MACKENZIE

ONCE upon a time, though not nearly such a long time ago as usual, a little girl called Dorothy lived with her widowed mother in a tall, grey house in a wide, grey London street. Dorothy's father had been killed in the war, and she was ten years old upon the time this story happened. Dorothy was the kind of little girl of whom everybody says, "What lovely eyes she has!" and when people say that it often means that they do not think a great deal of the rest of the child. Certainly nobody could have thought a great deal of the rest of Dorothy, for she was thin and peaked and pale, with rather skimpy hair and a general look of having been kept

cooped up, as people say. But her eyes, deep blue as the summer night and bright as stars, made you forget the little pale face all round. Mrs. Crisp, who was the landlady of the tall, grey house in which high up on the fourth storey Dorothy and her mother lived in one room, used to say that Dorothy's eyes always made her feel as if she (Mrs. Crisp) hadn't washed the back of her neck, by which I suppose Mrs. Crisp meant that when Dorothy gazed at anybody she made the person at whom she was gazing feel as if she were transparent.

"And really," Mrs. Crisp used to say, "it's more than strange she should actually be called Dorothy Deane, because the words of the song might have been written about her."

Now the words of the song to which Mrs. Crisp referred were:

Oh, Dorothy, Dorothy Deane,
Oh, Dorothy, what can it mean?
She has suddenly flown to regions unknown,
Along with a man on his flying-machine.

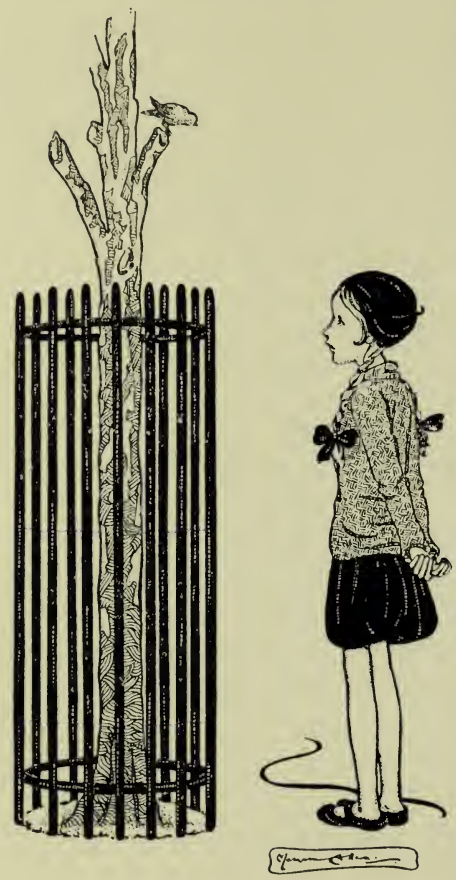
This was a popular song when I was a little boy about the same age as you are now, and in those days the idea of flying away with a man on his flying-machine sounded quite as improbable as if you were to find a magic carpet and take all your friends on it for a picnic in the moon.

Mrs. Deane was well aware how much in need of a change of air her little daughter was, but it was all she could do to earn enough money to keep the bed-sitting room in that tall grey house, and buy food and clothes for herself and Dorothy. When Mrs. Deane was a little girl herself she had lived far away in the country, and the greatest treat Dorothy could have was to sit on a footstool in front of the gas-fire, her head upon her mother's knee, listening to tales of when her mother was a little

girl living in the country. I don't know if you have ever fancied that you were sliding down a rainbow, or dancing on the top of a fountain, or floating through the air on thistledown, or falling asleep in the heart of a rose, but if you have you will be able to imagine what a mixture of all these fancies Dorothy's thoughts used to be while she was listening to her mother's tales. And depend upon it, however wonderful the country may be to children who have lived in it all their lives, it was even more wonderful to Dorothy as she dreamed about it in that dingy London house, her head upon her mother's knee. Of course she was sometimes able on Sundays to visit places like Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens, so that she was not quite so ignorant of what the country might be like as a little country girl who had never seen a city would be ignorant of what London looked like.

Dorothy used to feel sorry for the poor London parks, because they seemed to want to be much bigger than they were, and she used to think that the iron rails which hemmed them in all round were like regiments of stern soldiers always on guard to keep the parks from escaping into the country. She used to think that the London squares were bits of park which had escaped, but had been captured again and guarded more strictly than ever by the spears of the rails. Not that all the rails had spears. Some of them wore pineapple-shaped helmets like grenadiers of long ago. Dorothy did not know if they carried guns or swords, but however they were armed they seemed fairly well able to keep the London parks in order, although occasionally single trees must have made a dash for liberty. Dorothy was sorry for these trees, because when they were caught again not merely was each one of them surrounded by a guard of special rails which would not let them move

a foot away from the pavement, but also their beautiful branches were often lopped off by cruel men. She used to think how bitterly they must wish they had never made that dash for liberty, for while they were in the park they would at least have been able to talk to other trees and twig what was going on without having their branches cut off, or squads of unpleasant rails specially told off to prevent their trunks calling to other trunks.



The piece of country that Dorothy loved best was her own window-box. To be sure, it was far tinier than even the smallest London square; but it did not seem tiny to Dorothy, and she could walk about in it for hours and hours without coming to the end of its variety. It was a green window-box bounded, except along the side that faced the inside of the room, by a little green wooden paling with a little five-barred gate in the middle. You may be asking why Dorothy, who disapproved so much of shutting up parks and squares and single trees behind rails, should enclose her own window-box; but you must remember that this window-box was on the sill of a window high up in a tall grey house, and that if Dorothy's

flowers had escaped they would merely have fallen and dashed themselves to pieces on the pavement beneath. So in putting them into this little green wooden paling Dorothy was really doing a kindness to the flowers.

For a Christmas present her mother gave Dorothy a set of gardening tools so small that they could all be stitched on to one piece of cardboard. There was a tiny rake, a tiny trowel, a tiny hoe, and a tiny fork. But tiny though they were they were quite large enough for Dorothy's tiny garden. In February, for Dorothy's birthday, her mother bought her six penny packets of seeds. When the weather was too wet or cold for Dorothy to have the window open and fork and rake the mould in her window-box, she used to sit by the fire in a tattered old armchair and stare so hard at the brightly coloured pictures of the flowers which were one day to grow from these packets that sometimes they would seem to be growing already, and shedding their lovely perfume all about the shabby old London room. She used to rattle them, too, in her ear, and each packet made a different sound. The bumpiest packet was the one with the nasturtium seeds in it. In fact, Dorothy could actually count each fat crinkled crescent. The next biggest were the sweet-peas. These could be counted, too, and when they were rattled they made the loudest noise of all. Far gentler was the noise made by the pansy seeds, just a faint little lisping whisper like the wind lisping and whispering under the door. The other three packets were forget-me-nots,



French marigolds, and mignonette. When April came and it was time to sow the seeds, Dorothy was so excited and her hand shook so much that she nearly sowed them in the air instead of in the earth. One day a man came to the area-door of the tall grey house with a barrow of plants, and Mrs. Crisp bought for Dorothy two roots of hen-and-chicken daisies, one red and one white, to put in each corner, and a plant of creeping Jenny to put in the middle to creep over the little five-barred gate and creep down the side of the window-box, down and down until it almost reached the window of the floor below.

I cannot tell you how excited Dorothy was when she went to look at her window-box one morning and saw that all the earth was covered with tiny little pin-points of green. She was so excited that she ran all the way downstairs to find Mrs. Crisp in the dark basement and announce that her seeds had come up. Mrs. Crisp could hardly be seen, for it was washing day and she was moving about in a thick fog of steam. Dorothy thought the genie must have looked like her when the fisherman in the *Arabian Nights* let him out of the bottle.

"My seeds have come up, Mrs. Crisp," cried Dorothy, dancing about the kitchen and clapping her hands.

"And, really," Mrs. Crisp said afterwards, "I hardly knew her for the same child. I declare her cheeks were red as roses, and she was hopping and popping about like a flea in a blanket."

The next worry for Dorothy was the sparrows, for she had kindly, though perhaps rather foolishly, scattered crumbs in her garden every morning during the winter, and now the greedy sparrows, not finding crumbs, began to peck about among her seedlings.

"You can find plenty to eat now, you lazy sparrows," Dorothy said. "Go away, please, till next winter, and if you're good then I'll feed you again."

But the sparrows only twittered more greedily, and continued to hop and peck about, looking in Dorothy's little window-box as clumsy as ostriches. She tried the experiment of taking Mr. and Mrs. Noah out of her Noah's ark and putting them into the window-box as sentries. But they were not a success, and presently a great fat pigeon carried off Mr. Noah for her nest. No doubt she would have carried off Mrs. Noah as well if Dorothy had not brought her hurriedly indoors and put her back into the ark.

"What you want is one of them paper windmills," Mrs. Crisp told Dorothy, "and I'll get Mr. Crisp to fix it for you. There's nothing Mr. Crisp likes better than a little job of work like that."

And the very next Saturday afternoon, as luck would have it, when Dorothy was going out for a walk with her mother, they met a man who was selling paper windmills for a penny. So Dorothy's mother bought her one, and Mr. Crisp came grunting upstairs with a ball of twine and tied the windmill to one of the posts of the little five-barred gate.

Dorothy could never tire of watching the windmill go whirring round in the sweet May breeze; but the sparrows did not like it at all, and they held an indignation meeting in the gutter just above the window, and sat there in a ruffled row, cheeping at the windmill to make it stop. But the louder the sparrows cheeped the faster the merry little windmill whirred round, and all the insults that the sparrows cheeped at him had no effect on the busy little fellow. By the time his last paper sail was blown away Dorothy's flowers were big

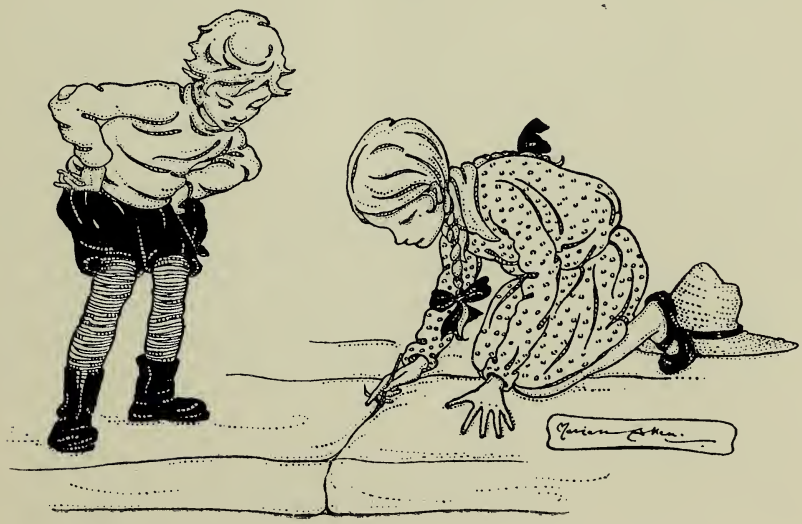
enough to look after themselves, though even when they were quite big the mischievous sparrows would sometimes come and peck off their buds just as horrid little boys will pull off little girls' hats and throw them into the gutter.

Still, lovely though the window-box was, and easily though Dorothy could spend hours imagining that she was walking about in this small green world she had made, Dorothy knew well that it was not the real country and that her garden, boundless though she could imagine it to be, was, as a matter of fact, nothing except a few spadefuls of soil in a narrow green box. Her mother promised once or twice that on a fine Sunday she would take Dorothy out for a whole day in the real country; but when Sunday came Mrs. Deane always seemed so tired that Dorothy did not like to remind her of her promise.

One hot afternoon at the beginning of August Dorothy had gone to fetch some medicine from the chemist for her mother, and on her way back she suddenly noticed growing between the flag-stones of the pavement a solitary blade of grass. It distressed Dorothy to think that sooner or later this blade of grass which had so bravely pushed its way through to reach the light must inevitably be trodden under foot by passers-by. Even as she thought this a stout old gentleman's boot as nearly as possible came down upon the blade of grass to trample it out of existence. She hurried home as fast as she could, and when she had given her mother the medicine she took her fork and asked her mother to let her go out again for a few minutes. Dorothy was afraid she would find the blade of grass crushed and broken when she got back, but by good fortune it was still upright. She knelt down on the pavement and worked away with her fork at the dusty soil which had accumulated in the crack between the two paving-

stones, and was by now almost as hard as the paving-stone itself.

Several people stopped to stare curiously at this pale-faced little girl with the big burning blue eyes who was scraping away at a crack between two paving-stones. One little boy leant over mysteriously to ask if she had lost a threepenny bit, and when she shook her head he did not believe her, but hung about waiting to see if he could notice it before she did, in which case he proposed to take a reward for his services. When he saw her get up with nothing but a blade of grass in her hand, he threw his head high in the air, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and went off whistling disdainfully. There was some excuse for his scorn, because the blade of grass which Dorothy had rescued did present a most miserable appearance. The green of it had turned to a sickly yellow colour, and the root so carefully prised up by Dorothy was not more substantial than a snippet of cotton. When the grass had been growing



bravely up from the crack of the pavement it had not looked so feeble, but now lying on the palm of Dorothy's hand it did not seem likely to repay the trouble she had taken to rescue it from the feet of passers-by. Even Dorothy herself was beginning to wonder whether she might not have done better to leave it where it was, so limp and forlorn and unlikely ever to grow again did it seem.

"Don't be unhappy, grass," she said to it. "I'm going to plant you in my window-box. There's a cosy little bare patch where the sparrows ate a poor sweet-pea, and you'll be able to grow there comfortably. The mignonette is growing all round this patch. You needn't feel at all shy, because mignonette is always sweet and kind. The nasturtiums are rather peppery and cross, but they're miles away at the other end of the window-box."

When Dorothy spoke like this, the blade of grass twitched where it lay on her hand as if it were trying to tell her that it heard and understood and appreciated what she was trying to do for it. When she arrived home the blade of grass looked more exhausted than ever, because Dorothy had had to hold it so tightly in her hand that the heat had nearly deprived it of the last bit of life left to it. The root of the grass was so thin and wispy that even Dorothy's small garden tools seemed too big to dig out a hole for it, and she planted it with a safety match. No sooner was the grass planted than it fainted right away into the arms of the mignonette. Dorothy was glad she had kept it out of the way of the nasturtiums, because without doubt the nasturtiums would at once have strangled a feeble intruder like this.

"Mignonettes are such darlings," said Dorothy. And she did not know that some little French girl years and years

ago must have thought just the same and said so aloud, because mignonette is the French for darling.

All through that August night the mignonette must have nursed the invalid upon its own tender cushions so sharply sweet, for in the morning the blade of grass was standing upright, still rather tottery, but with a green flush of health in its cheeks already. The French marigolds trilled their stiff gaudy skirts as a conceited turkey-cock trills his tail. They resented a blade of grass in the same window-box as themselves.

"But there," they puffed, "what can you expect from a common thing like that mignonette? If it weren't for her scent people would think that she was a weed herself."

The pansies knitted their eyebrows and glared at the intruder with their cross little faces, for they prided themselves on being very intellectual flowers, and they were fond of reminding people how Shakespeare had said that they were for thoughts.

"And we didn't get a think all night, the way that dowdy mignonette was fussing over this wretched bit of grass which has been planted on us."

"Forget-me-not, forget-me-not, forget-me-not," said the forget-me-nots, who were inclined to think that too much attention was being paid to the blade of grass, and their pale blue eyes were full of anxious tears.

"Forget you, indeed," said the scornful pansies, scowling more crossly than ever. "You never give anybody a chance to forget you."

"What's all that noise about?" the nasturtiums snapped from the other end of the window-box.

The nasturtiums were feeling particularly cross this morning, because, though everybody was saying how nice and warm the weather was, they with their Indian blood thought it very chilly, and they were shivering in their fine dresses of flame and orange and gold.

" Don't quarrel," the sweet-peas called up from the other side of the fence round Dorothy's window-box. The sweet-peas were quite content, for they could see all that was going on below and could fancy they were birds above the street soaring on wings of rose and lavender.

" I wish those cousins of mine weren't so disagreeable," creeping Jenny whispered to the sweet-peas. " I am sure that's what makes them so short-lived. Always in a temper."

" And you are always happy," said the sweet-peas.

" Yes," said creeping Jenny. " I just plod along with my humble little yellow flowers."

As for the hen-and-chicken daisies in the two corners, they said nothing. Each was much too busy trying to hatch more chickens than the other.

The day after Dorothy rescued the blade of grass Mrs. Deane told her daughter that she had met an old friend, who had invited her to go to the theatre with him that evening, and she asked Dorothy if she would feel very lonely all alone at the top of that tall grey house. In her heart Dorothy did think that she should feel rather lonely, but she did not tell her mother so, for fear lest she might spoil her pleasure.

" Dear me," said Mrs. Deane when she was dressing, " this evening frock of mine is very unfashionable."

" Is unfashionable the same as old-fashioned?" Dorothy asked.

"No, not quite. A frock can become unfashionable in a few weeks. A frock wouldn't be old-fashioned for a couple of years."

Dorothy said nothing. She was wondering what Mrs. Crisp had meant once by pointing to her and asking Mr. Crisp if he had ever seen a more old-fashioned expression on any child's face before.

"An old-fashioned frock is two years old. Did Mrs. Crisp mean that I looked only eight years old instead of ten?" Dorothy asked herself. It was puzzling.

Mrs. Deane had been invited out to dinner before going to the theatre, and she had arranged with Mrs. Crisp that Dorothy should have her supper down in the basement with them. But the landlady must have made a mistake in the day Mrs. Deane said she was going out, because when Dorothy went down to the basement after her mother had left the house she found nobody there, and the kitchen was quite still save for the ticking of the clock on the wall and quite empty save for the evening sun glowing through the geraniums in the window and shining down upon the back of the big sandy cat beside the fender. It was only for about a fortnight each year that the sun set in the right place to be able to shine into the dim basement like this and make it glitter and gleam like a cave full of treasures. But caves full of treasure can be rather alarming, as Aladdin found out when Abanazar left him shut up in one alone, and as Ali Baba found out when he heard the Forty Thieves coming back. And Dorothy found the kitchen such a frightening place in which to be alone that she hurried back upstairs again as fast as she could to the safety of her own room.

Dorothy sat by the open window to watch the rays of the setting sun stream through the paling of her window-box

and turn the leaves into emeralds, the flowers into Japanese lanterns. Then she fetched her can and watered all her plants, after which she sat sniffing in the scent of the mignonette and the sweet-peas, and listening to the drip-drop of the water until the sun went down behind the house-tops.

But she could not move even then. She sat there while the noise of London became fainter, until the pitter-pat of passers-by on the pavement below sounded presently not so loud as the drip-drop of the water. The lamps and the windows in the street were lighting up. The air was smoky blue now, growing darker every moment, and far away overhead shimmered the faint silver of the first few stars.

Dorothy was beginning to lose herself in the shadowy depths of her window-box, and becoming smaller and smaller herself the farther she wandered along the sweet-scented glades beneath her flowers. In winter she had been able to wander among the magic forest paths of the gas-fire, seeming to herself no larger than some shrivelled black match which had slipped down one of the crevices covered with flamy ferns. These matches often used to persuade her to follow them, and before they slipped out of sight they would wave lanterns to show Dorothy the way on into the heart of the fire forest.

Now, while she was wandering in her window-box, the blade of grass suddenly lighted up like one of those matches, but with a pale green glow; and when Dorothy looked closer, it was no longer a blade of grass, but an exquisite little creature of living green.

Dorothy could never explain exactly how it happened, or when it happened, or where it happened, and least of all why it happened. But for this you must not blame Dorothy, because if you ever meet a fairy yourself you will find that words like

" how," " when," " where," and " why " cease to have any meaning. Words like " how," " when," " where," and " why," which seem so important, are really only the dull stammerings of poor mortals, who think they are expressing something. Tell your governess this next time you have to do " parsing " and are finding it more than usually dull.

Anyway, it did happen. The pattern on the wallpaper came to life, and luckily the pattern on the wallpaper in this room was of cherries and leaves and little blue birds. When it came to life, all the cherry trees rustled and all the little blue birds began to sing. When you think what the effect would be if some wallpapers you know came to life, especially some of the wallpapers we see nowadays, you will agree with me that Dorothy was lucky. Then the carpet came to life, and Dorothy, who thought she knew every inch of that old brown and green carpet, was surprised to find how much more interesting it was than she had ever fancied it could be on the most fanciful walk she had taken on it. The old carpet was, in fact, a whole countryside of ploughed fields and green fields and hedges and ditches. Then the toilet-jug came to life and proved to be in a little lake on the top of a hill, to which a flock of wild swans came swooping down to swim about on its crystal surface. And then Dorothy saw that the swansdown from her mother's dressing-jacket was gone, and presently that the woollen dressing-jacket itself was gone and that the door on which it hung had changed into a wooded hillside covered with sheep. And then . . . but really I don't know why I keep saying " and then," for everything that happened happened at once, and yet it didn't happen at once if you can understand what I mean, or rather what Dorothy meant, for that was the way she told her story of this strange adventure. If Dorothy



She was sitting in the boughs of a tall tree.

had been a fairy or if I were a fairy either of us could probably make it perfectly clear about this "at once," but both being mortals like you we cannot explain it any better than you can. At any rate, the next thing Dorothy remembered was that instead of being in her room at all she was sitting in the boughs of a tall tree and looking down at nothing but country. London had entirely vanished, and perched on a leaf at the very edge of the bough on which Dorothy sat was the green fairy who had appeared to her in the window-box, and this is what the fairy said:

"Once upon a time there were no houses where you live, Dorothy; but all was beautiful country such as stretches beneath you in every direction at this moment. In those days you would be seeing more fairies in a moment than now you would see butterflies in the whole of your life. But men came and began to build more and more houses, more and more streets, more and more factories, and the Fairy King sounded his horn one day and summoned all the fairies to hear his commands. 'We can no longer live here,' he told us, 'for they are building a city called London, and our enemies the goblins, from under the earth, will do all they can to help man make it impossible for us to exist here any longer.'

"So the Fairy King and the Fairy Queen and all the fairy Court flew to Warwickshire, where they lived happily until a city called Birmingham came and drove them out, though not before Shakespeare had written about them in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But soon there was no safe place for the fairies in England. Myriads and myriads of them were caught in the smoke of great cities, and had to fly so high to avoid it that they could not fly down to earth again, and that is why only those who flew as far as the Highlands of Scotland,

and the west of Ireland, and the mountains of Wales, and the moors of Cornwall when they were first warned by the Fairy King succeeded in remaining in these islands at all. And I fear that very few of them will be left soon anywhere, for fairies cannot stand the smell of petrol any better than the smoke of cities. Besides, mortals began to hate us, for mortals always hate those whom they have injured. And since we were not mortals men could not injure us as they injure one another, so they showed their hate by not believing in us, and although, of course, you cannot kill a fairy by disbelieving in it, you can wither it. So what you might think, for instance, was a withered leaf or a faded flower might really be that, and yet it might not be at the same time, though being a little mortal girl I fear you will not be able to understand my fairy thought.

" When the Fairy King told us all to fly away, I could not bring myself to forsake this tree, in the memory of whose branches you are now sitting. I could not bear the idea of losing my cosy bed among the leaves scattered by him every autumn, and I could not bear to give up waking all the twigs in spring with kisses from my green lips. So I stayed behind, and for many, many years, even when houses had been built all round, my old tree was allowed to stay, and the field in which it grew became what is called a piece of waste ground. Men called it waste ground because they were so filled now with pride at the clever way in which they were making money that they thought any piece of green land not built upon was wasted. The grass all round the tree was defiled by the rubbish which people threw over it, and yet I could not bring myself to escape, even although by now my wintry bed of leaves was all mixed up with sardine tins and dirty pieces of newspaper and old rags. Once I did try to fly away and find my fairy companions of



long ago, but the London smuts beat down upon my wings, and I was glad to go back and nestle down among the leaves of the old tree I loved.

" ' You'd better have gone, you'd better have gone,' said the tree. ' They won't let me stay here much longer, and then what will you do ?'

" ' But where could I go if I went ?' I asked. ' It is too late now to reach my fairy companions, and I do not want to fly up and up into the cold air and leave the green earth I love.'

" ' Well, you will have to make up your mind to go sooner or later, because at the rate men are building cities there will be no green earth left soon,' the old tree creaked.

" And indeed the very next day he was cut down, and they set about turning the piece of waste ground into a street.

" For some time I found shelter in the stump of the old tree; but at last the stump was rooted up, and I had nothing left to hide me except a tuft of grass. Then I foolishly let myself fall into my winter sleep; and when I woke up in spring I found that I was under the pavement."

" But couldn't you escape?" asked Dorothy.

" No, I couldn't escape," said the fairy, " because I had foolishly let myself be cut off from anything that grew naturally, and the kind of fairy that I am loses the power to move where it wants when it loses touch with flowers or trees or grass. I could not pass of my own accord through the paving-stones laid by men. When I had my chance to leave the earth I did not take it, because I did not want to spend the rest of time going up and up through the cold blue air, getting farther and farther and farther away from all that I loved best. So when I tried to fly sideways and the smuts drove me back I was glad of the excuse to return to the old tree. Even now I might have gone down through the earth, but I was afraid lest the goblins should keep me there a prisoner for ever. There was now only one chance left for me, which was to find a seed which would somehow manage to grow through the pavement and take me with it. Even that was not all I had to do, for the only thing that could set me free from the plant that had brought me to earth again would be a loving thought. It would take too long to tell you of all my many attempts to escape. Once I was in a plumy groundsel seed, and the groundsel struggled up through a crack in the pavement, only to be picked at once by a little boy for his canary, after which the root shrivelled and died, leaving me still a prisoner. Several

times I found grass seeds ready to help me, but as soon as the first blade struggled through it would be crushed beneath the foot of some passer-by. But as the years went by the seeds gradually vanished, and at last I began to despair. Life was very dull under that paving-stone. In all the weary time I was there I only met one living creature, and that was a poor old worm who had been attacked by a thrush and in his agitation taken the wrong hole. But worms are not interesting to talk to. The only thing they can say over and over again is 'It's all the same to me.' So when the worm, without turning, wriggled back the same way it had come I did not miss it. At last I tried to make an end of myself by not believing I existed, but it was no good. Mortals can make fairies as good as dead by doing that; but fairies cannot do it to themselves or one another.

"And so the dreary years went by until at last one day when I was taking my dark, lonely walk between the paving-stone and the earth I came across another grass seed.

"'Will you try to grow if I do all I can to help you?' I asked the seed. And the seed promised it would do its best, but said it doubted if it would be able to grow anywhere worth while.

"'However, I'm just as tired of being here as you are,' it said. 'So get inside, and I'll make a good try to grow somewhere.'

"What a struggle it was! The earth seemed just as hard as the paving-stones themselves.

"'Excelsior!' cried the seed as the white root fought its way up. And I knew that the humble little grass was trying to live up to its grand Latin name. At last a solitary blade

managed to reach the air. It was almost as white as the root with exhaustion. Every moment I expected it to be trodden under foot and to find myself back under the paving-stones. But somehow it escaped destruction. And then you came by, Dorothy, and you were sorry for the poor starved blade of grass. You dug it up and planted it in your window-box, and by that loving thought you have helped me to get free."

"And will you live for ever in my window-box?" Dorothy asked.

"Alas, no," said the fairy, "because you will grow up, Dorothy, and then you won't believe in me any longer. Your window-box will be broken up, and what will become of me then? My long imprisonment has taught me wisdom, child. I understand at last that I cannot stay any longer on earth. So I shall fly up and up to join my fairy companions of long ago in the air. Perhaps one day mortals will learn their lesson too, and then the fairies will be able to come back. But before I go I am allowed to grant you one wish. What is your wish, Dorothy?"

"I wish to live in the country," said Dorothy at once.

In a moment the fairy had vanished, and Dorothy, instead of sitting in the branches of a tree and looking down over a wide countryside, was sitting in her chair by the open window and looking at her window-box. But it seemed to her that high above her in the darkness of the night she could see a tiny green spark flying upward faster and faster until it was lost among the stars.

Just then the door of the room opened, and Dorothy's mother came in and turned on the light.

"Good gracious, dear child, aren't you in bed yet? It's nearly twelve o'clock. To bed! To bed!"

When Dorothy was in bed, her mother made her some bread and milk and sat down beside her.

" I've got something to tell you," she said, when Dorothy had finished her very late supper. " You are going to have another father, darling, and then he and you and I are all going to live in the country where I used to live when I was a little girl. Are you glad ?"

Mrs. Deane squeezed her small daughter's hand somewhat anxiously, and her cheeks were flushed.

It was then that Dorothy told her mother about the fairy in the window-box, and of the promise it had made.

" You do believe in fairies, don't you ?" she asked, gazing at her mother with those deep eyes that made dear old Mrs. Crisp feel that they were looking right through her.

" Of course I do. See how quickly she has kept her promise."

" Don't call it ' she,' " said Dorothy. " It was an ' it.' It called itself ' it.' And it was so tiny. Oh, you've no idea how tiny it was. I wish you could have seen that tiny green fairy, mother."

" I wish I had, my sweet," said Mrs. Deane.

In the morning when Dorothy went to look at her window-box she found that the blade of grass was now as green as the fairy itself, and what is more that a baby blade of grass was pushing up beside it.

" You shall come down with me into the country, grass," Dorothy promised, " and perhaps you'll be able to grow into a lawn. Or would you rather grow into a field ?"



" I've got something to tell you."

The grass nodded in the morning breeze.

" Then you shall be a field," said Dorothy.

" Forget-me-not, forget-me-not, forget-me-not," the anxious blue eyes of the forget-me-nots pleaded.

" Of course I shan't forget you. I shan't forget any of my flowers. You shall all come with me to live in the country."

And while Dorothy was having her breakfast the flowers talked about the change in store for them.

" Hope it'll be warmer down there than here," said the nasturtiums. " We may be able to do a bit of climbing if it is."

" We'll be getting sticks to grow on now," said the sweet-peas. " We ought to start a competition to see which can grow the highest."

And in their excitement at the prospect the sweet-peas fluttered their wings like birds learning to fly.

" We may or may not like the country," said the French marigolds pomponously. " They say it can be very muddy down there. Well, we shall see."

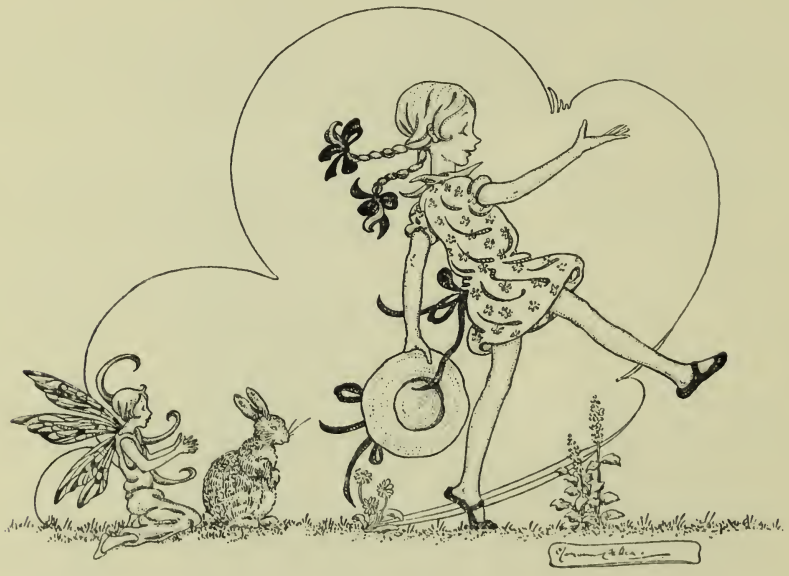
" We shall have a little time to think in the country, that's one advantage," said the pansies, and their faces had never looked so pleasant for a long time.

" I shall enjoy creeping round and exploring," said creeping Jenny.

The hen-and-chicken daisies thought of all the room there would be for chickens, and the white ones grew so excited at

the prospect that they began to turn crimson round their edges, much to the indignation of the red hen-and-chicken daisies, who became almost purple at the idea of those washed-out white daisies daring to compete with them.

The mignonette said nothing. It just smelt sweeter than ever.



TWICE ONE IS TWINS

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Prologue

This Page is for Adults.

THIS was not written to deceive.
The Double Door of " Make-Believe "
Is always open to the mind,
In children of a certain kind.
And when ill-luck, in any shape,
Descends on them, they can escape
Through Double Doors, from dark despond,
Into a fairer life beyond.

" The world is old," as bards have sung;
And yet the world stays always young,
For those who wisely can achieve
The winding ways of Make-Believe.
They twist and wriggle up and down,
Through country-side and crowded town,
Through open field and shady lane,
Through shining sun and falling rain.
Far over hill and dale they roam,
But always in the end come home,
Bringing us back, 'tis plain to see,
With better appetites for tea !



From dark despond into a fairer life beyond.

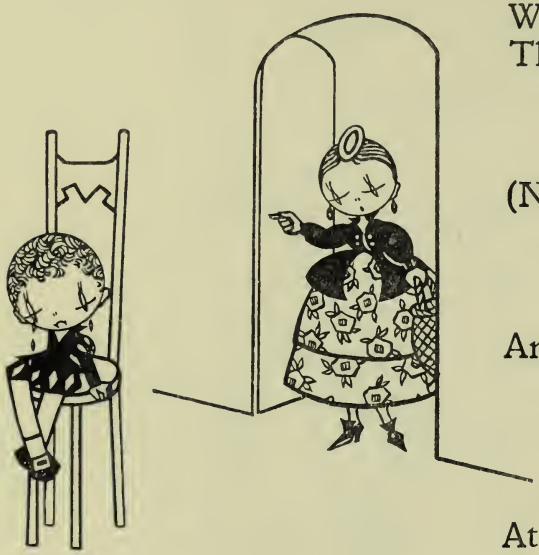
Jimmy and Sammy
Had got a kind Mammy:
They lived in a land where kind Mammies abound
And no doubt, all about,
There are similar Sammies,
And similar Jimmies,
And similar Mammies;
And all through humanity
(Barring insanity)
Similar families are to be found.

Now Sammy and Jimmy, I have to explain,
Are both the same person; I say it again—
And here I have written it down:
Sammy was Jimmy, and Jimmy was Sammy,
And each was the only one son of his Mammy
(She hadn't another;
He hadn't a brother);
And the family's surname was Brown.



And the reason for this—oh, how clever I am!—
Is that while I am writing of him,
Sometimes, in my rhymes, I shall want to say "Sam,"
And sometimes I shall want to say "Jim."

So whatever one calls him,
Whatever befalls him,
Whatever you're told about *him*—
If he falls in the jam,
It will always be Sam;
And the jam will be always on Jim.



When you've got that by heart,
Then my story can start.

Now Sammy, dear lad,
Was often quite bad
(Not good, as was little Jack Horner);
And then—why, of course,
His kind Mammy got cross,
And put him to stand in the corner.
And one day, having done so,
Because (the tale runs so)
At mischief she happened to spot him,
She made him go there,
And sit down in a chair,
And went out of the house—and forgot him!

Forgot him? Why, yes.
Why she did—can't you guess?
For when a kind Mammy has started to shop,
When once she begins
Buying needles and pins,



And the meats and the sweets
That one sees in the streets,
The ribbons, the reels,
The rich candy peels,
The cakes and the buns,
And the round Sally Lunns,
The nuts and the grapes,
And the things of all shapes—

The bananas and pears,
And the coconut squares,
And the sticks she requires
For lighting her fires;
When a Mammy thus shops,
Then she finds it such fun,
That it's seldom she stops
Till her shopping is done.



And so this kind Mammy,
With no one to warn her,
Forgot to let Sammy
Come out of his corner!

Poor little Jimmy! Poor little Sammy!
There he sits—forgotten by his Mammy.
There he sticks,
Face to the wall:
The clock ticks,
The shadows fall,
The fire-light glow
Burns down to a spark,
The flame goes low,
The room gets dark;
Behind the wainscot scrabbles a mouse—
That is the only sound in the house:
The house is empty; no step on the stair;
There, forgotten, he sits in his chair:

Because kind Mummy has had to scold him,
There he sits where Mummy has told him—
Sits . . .
Waiting. . . .
Alas, and alack!
And Mummy forgets him, and doesn't come back!

So he sits, with nothing at all—
Nothing to look at, except the wall—
Except the wall.

Now the wall had a picture-paper on it
Of an old dame in a brown poke bonnet,
Walking slow walking slow.
And along the road she had to go,
Green trees all in a row;
And a gabled house with windows wide.
But the *door* was round the other side.



Sammy had often seen it before,
And wished he could go round to the door;
But never before had he sat and sat,
In a world all grown empty and flat,
With time lagging,
And hope flagging,
And nothing to look at but only that—
Nothing to think of—nothing to do.
Nothing nice . . . or naughty . . . or new. . . .
Nothing. . . *What's that?*
A sound comes through,
Out of the wall:
So faint, so small,
He couldn't be sure he'd heard it at all.

He sits, and waits, and listens in fear. . . .
Rat-a-tat-tat! . . .
Rat-a-tat-tat! . . .
Faint but clear
Comes the sound to his ear.
Sammy listens, and thinks for sure
It's somebody knocking at somebody's door.
Somebody? Who?
Was it me? Was it you?
Or only a fancy that couldn't be true?

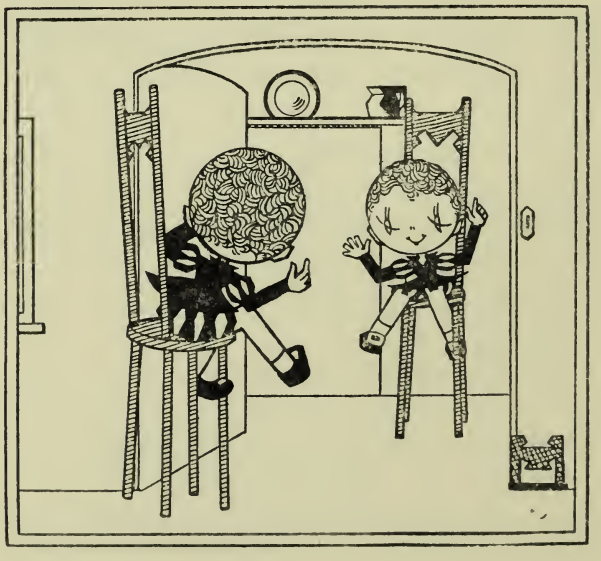
The sound was small;
But his ears could catch
The fall of a knock,
The click of a latch—
That seemed to come *from inside the wall!*

And all at once, on its paper ground,
With never a sound,
And no trouble at all,
The house turns round—right round ! right round !
And shows him—a *door !*

Oh, *you:*
What would you do ?—
If . . . the sound . . . of a knock . . . were to fall,
Soft and small
On a part of the wall,
Where never before
Had there been any door:
And if, as you heard it,
Though nothing had stirred it,
Where up to that minute the place had been bare,
You suddenly saw that a door *was* there—
With a latch to lift, and a key, and a lock,
While again came the sound of a " Knock, knock,
knock ";
And if, as you waited,
And listened as stated,
Not sure that your eyes and your ears hadn't cheated,
Until, with breath bated,
You heard it repeated:
Then—*you*——
What should you do ?

What did *they* do ?—that poor little pair,
Sammy and Jimmy, left to sit there,
Hour after hour, in a comfortless chair ?
What did *they* do ?

Sammy and Jimmy were better than gold;
They stayed in their chair as they both had been told:
But, reaching a hand to the door on their side,
They tapped, and then waited. And somebody cried
" Come in ! *Do* come in !" And the door opened wide.
And, looking, they saw, in a room like their own,
A little boy sitting, perched up all alone,
On a chair in a corner—exactly like theirs.
And the rest of the things in the room—all the chairs,
The table, the cupboard, the carpet, the rugs,
The curtain, the clock, and the mantelpiece mugs,
The fender and fire-irons, window and blind,
Were all like their own—just the very same kind.
And the poor little boy who sat there in the chair—
It was Sammy and Jimmy himself. I declare !



Then Sammy exclaimed, with his brain all a-bubble,
" There, Jimmy ! Now didn't I say I was double ?
And that anyone born with a name that begins
With ' Jimmy and Sammy ' was bound to be twins ?
For if really and truly 'tis Jimmy I am,
Then really and truly I cannot be Sam;
And if I am Sam, then I cannot be Jim;
Yet here am I sitting, the image of him.
And there is he sitting, the image of me,
Each twin to the other, as plain as can be.
So if he is Jimmy, then I must be Sammy;
And Jimmy and I, we will have the same Mammy."

Then Sammy, from this side, to Jim on the other,
Cried, " Hi ! Is that you ? Are you Jimmy, my brother ? "
And Jim, on the far side, to Sammy on this,
Cried, " Sammy, dear Sammy, come give me a kiss !
For I'm here all alone; and it's you that I miss."

But Sammy, on this side, replied in despair,
" Oh, Jimmy, I *mustn't!* I'm here on the chair
Where Mummy has put me; and here I must stay,
For Mummy has said I must learn to obey;
Then goes and forgets me, to teach me the way."

Said Jimmy, on that side, to Sammy on this,
" I've not got a Mummy to love or to kiss.
I never *have* had, ever since I was small,
Because I was born the wrong side of the wall;
I've not had a Daddy or Mummy at all.
I'm waiting to find one."

Said Sammy, " That's fine!
Come over to *this* side, and you shall have mine.
And won't it be fun, when our Mummy begins
To turn up the light, and she finds she has twins!"





No sooner 'twas said, than the thing was all done:
Jim was up from his chair, and came through with a run;
And when he was there, for his Mummy to find him,
The door disappeared, and the wall closed behind him!

The wall had still got the picture on it
Of the old dame in the brown poke bonnet;
And along the road she had to go
Were green trees all in a row,
And a gabled house with its windows wide,
But the *door* was round on the other side.
And there, under the deepening gloom,
Sat Sammy and Jimmy, alone in the room.
So dark it grew, as they waited for Mammy,
Sam couldn't see Jim, and Jim couldn't see Sammy.

Just then they heard the street-door slam.
" That's our Mummy come back!" cried Sam.
And pitter-patter, with scurrying feet,
Up she came running. " Oh, Sammy, my sweet,



My precious !" cried Mummy. " You poor little pet, you !
Did Mummy go out ? And did Mummy forget you ?
Forgive naughty Mummy !" She felt till she found him;
And there, in the darkness, she put her arms round him,
And cuddled and kissed, as in tears she half-drowned him.

Then Sammy said, " Mammy,
I've something to show you.
Turn on the light,
So that Jimmy may know you!
For while you've been shopping
For needles and pins,
I've done something topping:
I've turned into twins."

" Into *what?* Into *which?*" . . .
Jimmy said, " Sammy's right."
Then she ran to the switch,
And she turned on the light. . . .

* * * * * *

And my story here ends. If you don't think it true,
What matter for that? What do *I* care for *you?*
That my story's exact,
I know for a fact,
And that where she left One she came back to find Two.

* * * * * *

Jimmy and Sammy
Have got a kind Mammy;
They live in a land where kind Mammies abound.
And no doubt all about
There are similar Sammies,
And similar Jimmies,
And similar Mammies;
And all through humanity
(Barring insanity)
Similar families are to be found.



CLOP, THE RUNAWAY DONKEY



By

MABEL MARLOWE

DUTCHY-DAN was an odd-job man who owned a donkey named Clop. This donkey never lost the opportunity to run away.

No sooner was the stable door opened than Clop's artful eye began watching for a chance to bolt, and if he managed to escape it was a rare job for Dutchy-Dan to catch him again.

It was of little use to supply this tiresome donkey with ordinary harness. Something extra was required, so Dutchy-Dan bought a tightish canvas collar to be worn underneath Clop's harness. When work for the day was ended, and Clop was safely in his stable with the door shut, the harness was lifted off and hung upon a hook. But the collar stayed on, all day and all night. It had a brass ring threaded upon it, and a rope went through the ring to a staple in the wall.

So that was that.

Now it happened that Dutchy-Dan was very drowsy when he awoke on Midsummer Day. The misty dawn was pink as he unlatched the stable door and stepped over the threshold into the warm, hay-smelling dimness where the watchful Clop was tethered (or should have been tethered).

Dutchy-Dan yawned as he entered. His big hand spread its fingers wide as he hid the cavernous gaping—and he failed to see that there was no donkey in the dim corner.

Clop was not there. Oh dear no!

Clop had discovered to his joy that he could twist his head around and bite the rope which held him prisoner. Half of this rope showed a frayed and chewed end dangling from the wall. The other half still hung from the brass ring around Clop's collar. A very untidy tassel indeed—but Clop was not worrying about that. He had something else to think about.

Like a statue he stood, so close to the doorway that scarcely an inch separated his nose from the chink. If Dutchy-Dan had not yawned he would have seen him—and perhaps he would have stopped him.

But no. The odd-job man stepped over the sunny threshold into the gloom, and for one moment there was silence. Then—then—there came a half-smothered snort, followed immediately by a clopety noise of hoofs. A shadow shaped like a donkey filled the gleaming doorway for the space of one second or less.

"Clop-clop-clop-clop," went four eager hoofs, and the runaway donkey was off.

* * * * *

Clatter, clatter! through the stable yard.

Thud, thud! around the haystack.

Clopety-clop! across the cobbled yard, where the chickens were scrambling for corn.

Trample, trample! on the mushroom plot, doing a rare amount of damage.

Gallop, gallop! across the uncut hay, all pied with daisies and clover, and smelling most tempting to a donkey nose, believe me!

Splash, splash! through the cow-pond—with a wild eye cast backward to see if there was time to stop for a drink!

But Dutchy-Dan was hot on the pursuit.

"Stop, *stop!*" he shouted, already out of breath.

Clop took a hurried pull at the water, kicked his heels in the air and pranced away. His swishing tail vanished behind the hawthorn hedge.

"Aha!" gasped Dutchy-Dan, with a grin. "Aha, my fine donkey! Your runaway antics will soon come to an end now—for you've chosen the way where you can't get out."

Thud, thud! across the narrowing meadow. The hedges grew closer and closer. The space between grew smaller and smaller, until there was nothing but a grassy passage leading to Turnabout Stile.

"Now you're *caught*," cried the breathless Dutchy-Dan.

* * * * *

Turnabout Stile had been built from some wood which had once been a fence around a Witch's house. So folks said, anyway. Witch and house had vanished long ago, and many people doubted that they had ever existed.

Stake by stake the fence had been used for firewood, and scarcely a soul remembered that Turnabout Stile was made from bewitched wood. True, there was little magic left, but

once a year, on Midsummer Day, curious things happened, and no one knew why.

Once a farmer driving a pig from market had taken a short cut over the stile, and he had arrived home with the halter twisted round his neck, and such a mix-up of pig and farmer that it was a rare job to know which was which.

Once a poacher was found inside a sack beside the stile. And once a rabbit had been seen to stand upon the top rail, and spread some wide *wings*, and fly clumsily above the church spire.

Now it happened that just as Clop the Runaway Donkey reached Turnabout Stile, Old Wisey the teacher from Wisdom School was climbing over the top.

"Hi!" shouted Dutchy-Dan. "Hi, Old Wisey, catch hold of yon donkey for me!"

"I'll do what I can," replied the teacher, and he leaned over and made a grab.

"Got you," he cried, and his lucky fingers closed tightly about the dangling tassel which hung from Clopety's canvas collar. The donkey gave him a reproachful look—but, no sooner did the eyes of the animal meet the eyes of the man than something astounding happened. The schoolmaster turned into the donkey—and the donkey turned into him.

Both of them knew it, too.

But Dutchy-Dan did not know. He came running up, all puffing and blowing.

"Thank you, sir," he said to the wrong person, who was standing dazed at the wrong side of the stile. "That was a fine catch indeed. But it beats me how yon donkey got on *that* side of the stile. Clean over the top he must have



Old Wisey . . . was climbing over the top.

jumped. Luckily you held him firm, or he would have led me a dance all over the county."

He took hold of the donkey by the collar, and gave him a sound box on the ears.

* * * * *

Clop the Runaway Donkey was horrified to find himself turned into a man. He tried to make a fuss about it, saying, "Hee-haw, hee-haw!" with all the strength of his lungs. But the words which floated out upon the air were like this:

"Oh, Dutchy-Dan, indeed it gave me great pleasure to help you. I'm glad I happened to be taking my morning walk in this direction. Do you know, today is the longest day in the year."

"Sorry I can't stop to chat with you," said Dutchy-Dan, keeping hold of a prancing animal with great difficulty. "This donkey of mine has made me late already."

"Never mind. Today is the longest day," replied the false schoolmaster.

He turned into the meadow, and as the hedge hid him from sight he heard a thunderous, clopety noise. Dutchy-Dan and the false donkey were having a tussle. Hoofs were beating upon the ground in a wild tattoo. Snortings and hee-hawings filled the morning air with clamour.

The man-in-the-meadow grinned. He took hold of his jaw and felt the shape of it, pulling his lips back over his teeth.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!" he tried to murmur to himself. But the words which he uttered were like this:

"More things happen on Midsummer Day than this world dreams of. Well, well, well! Let's see what I've got in my pocket."

He searched and found a small leather-bound book.

"Ha! this looks tasty," he said, and he commenced to chew at the cover.

"Good-morning," cried a farmer, peering over the hedge. "You are up early this morning, I see. Having your breakfast in the open air, I see! What is it you are eating?"

The man held up the tattered remnant.

"Isn't that a *book?*" cried the farmer.

"It *was* a book," said the man, and he took another bite. The leather binding went down his throat as smoothly as marmalade. Next he ate the pages, every single one from beginning to end.

The eyes of the farmer goggled as he watched.

"That looks a queer kind of breakfast," he said. Whereupon the donkey-schoolmaster took off one shoe, and made a mighty bite at the sole.

The farmer turned pale beneath his tan. Slowly he backed away from the hedge, and when he was a little distance off he ran like the wind.

"Something's wrong with Old Wisey," he cried to those whom he met. "He's sitting in the meadow beyond Turnabout Stile, making a breakfast of *leather*. Eating his shoes! Chewing at a book-cover!"

"Nonsense!"

"Very well, go and see for yourselves."

Two by two they went to peep. The donkey-fellow was still there, looking so exactly like Old Wisey that no one could have guessed the mistake.

But oh, how curiously he was behaving!

Having chewed both shoes, soles, heels, laces and all, the bewitched man was biting at the buttercups, pulling them up by the roots, and eating leaves, flowers, roots and all.

"Hee-haw!" he mumbled to himself as he fed; but the folk around him heard the recital of a poem like this:

"O golden bloom, on slender stem you trim the meadow's grassy hem, and weave a circling diadem. Each flower a star, each star a gem!"

"What is he talking about?"

"He's saying poetry."

"Why is he saying poetry in the holidays?"

"Look, he is smelling the tops of those tall thistles! I do declare he is nibbling at them—like a goat, or an ass. And now he has bent his face to the ground."

"Just hear how he snuffles!"

"He's going into the pond, clothes and all. See how he splashes! And now he's stooping to drink. Weeds and cresses are going into his throat. He'll choke! Hi, hi! Old Wisey, are you *ill?* Are you mad? Come out of that."

"Hee-haw!" said the animal-man, looking round. But the people who listened heard these words:

"Mad? No, of course I'm not mad! I never felt more cheerful in my life. Ill? No, indeed I'm not ill! I've never felt better since the day I was born. *Who* wants a pick-a-back ride?"

"We do!" said three boys, scrambling over the stile.

"Come back! Come back!" shouted the others. But it was too late. The youngsters were already hoisted upon the shoulders and back of the schoolmaster, clinging with hands and with knees, and laughing aloud as he commenced



The youngsters were already hoisted upon the shoulders and back of the schoolmaster.

to caper. Their merry shrieks echoed in the meadow as they were carried along, jolted at every step. Right to the end of the grassy passage they went—and away and away over the widening fields—away and away up hills and down dells—until they were completely out of sight.

* * * * *

But what about Dutchy-Dan and his donkey?

Dutchy-Dan was not in the sweetest of tempers as he hauled a refractory animal along the lanes which led back to the stable. His gripping fist held so tightly to the canvas collar that the unfortunate creature was wellnigh throttled.

However, he kicked and he pranced. He tugged and he pulled. He jerked and he struggled. And all the time he was talking, talking, talking.

"How *dare* you box my ears? How *dare* you cuff me? What *right* have you to hold me by the collar, and drag me along the lanes? How *dare* you! How *dare* you!"

These were the words which the frantic schoolmaster yelled at his remorseless captor. But the only sounds which reached the ears of Dutchy-Dan were the braying sounds which a donkey makes when he is rattled.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!"

"You can stop that noise. I'm taking no notice of that noise," said Dutchy-Dan, with an extra tug at the collar.

"I'll have you arrested for this! I'll report you to the *police!* Take me back to Turnabout Stile, at once. Let me get my proper shape, *at once.*"

"Stop this hee-hawing—and stop this kicking," said Dutchy-Dan. "I don't know what ails you this morning. Running away! Jumping over a stile! Struggling when

it's plain I've got you tight! *What?* You'd open your jaws at me? You'd attempt to *bite* me? Take care, Clop, or I shall be forced to tickle you with this whip of mine."

"Don't call me *Clop,*" brayed the enraged animal. But alas! the only noise which he managed to emit was a lamentable hee-haw. And of all the snortings that ever issued from wide-open, frantic jaws—of all the bellowings that ever echoed from quivering nostrils—this trumpeting made by Clop the Donkey, who was not Clop the Donkey, was indeed the loudest and the worst.

No wonder Dutchy-Dan administered a number of ungentle digs with a bony elbow! No wonder he pulled the obstinate donkey mercilessly to the stable, and backed him between the shafts of a waiting cart in a manner fearful to behold!

"Hee-haw—hee-haw—*hee*-haw!" bellowed the animal.

"Mighty late I shall be," cried Dutchy-Dan crossly, as he buckled the harness securely. "I shouldn't be surprised if I lost this job. 'Tisn't often I get the chance to be a greengrocer and sell vegetables. Lucky the cart is ready packed for me. Come along now—get a move on——"

"I won't budge," said the steed.

"Stop hee-hawing, and get a move on," said Dutchy-Dan, reaching for his whip. The eyes of the bewitched donkey slewed round and looked. He began to move.

But all along the country road he brayed and he brayed without ceasing until the first customer came running out.

Then he was silent.

"You're late," cried the cottager. "Hurry now, and serve me with some potatoes."

"How many?" said Dutchy-Dan.

"Three pounds. I'll draw a bucket of water from the pump while you are weighing them."

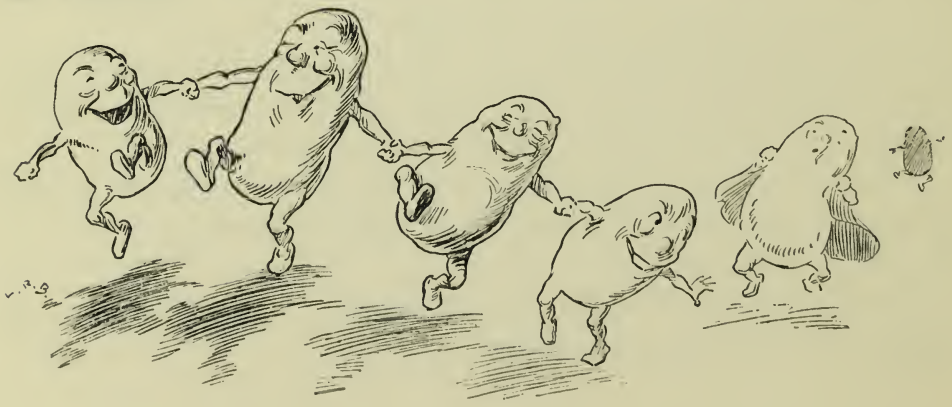
"Right."

Dutchy-Dan opened the sack of potatoes, but—no sooner did daylight shine upon them than they all began to move. Those nearest the opening hopped into the scale-pan and weighed themselves. Exactly three pounds!

"Well——" began Dutchy-Dan. But the potatoes had commenced to bounce like balls. They hopped like frogs to the tailboard of the cart. Little dumpy legs grew upon each potato. Hands sprouted and clasped other hands. Merry faces on wagging heads grinned at one another, and suddenly all the three pounds leaped to the road and went dancing down the hill.

"You clumsy fellow—you've spilled the lot," said the cottager crossly. "Look at them, bouncing away! You'd better go and get them."

Dutchy-Dan started off down the hillside with a long-legged striding. There were the potatoes, all in a heap at the bottom.



" Well, upon my word, I must be bewitched this morning !" gasped Dutchy-Dan, gathering them up. " I could have sworn I saw a lot of pigmy boys—but you are nothing but potatoes after all. I suppose I shall have to weigh you again."

He hurried back and tipped them into the scale-pan. But no sooner did they touch it than every potato commenced to squiggle. They stood on end. Each vegetable split down the chest and tossed off his jacket. Naked and white, they ran to the edge of the tailboard, and took curving dives into the bucket of water below.

" Whew !" whispered Dutchy-Dan, peering into the coolness. " I declare they are swimming round and round. Are they potatoes, or are they water-pixies ?"

" Hee-haw !" bellowed the donkey, suddenly finding his voice again.

" What are you muttering about ? What is your donkey hee-hawing about ?" said the cottager, coming close and looking into the bucket. " Are those potatoes ready ? *What ?* You've peeled them and washed them, ready for cooking ? That's quick work, I must say. And a fine way to serve vegetables too."

Dutchy-Dan gave the bucket and its contents a piercing look. Like gimlets his eyes glared at them. But not a movement could be seen. Every vegetable was cold, white, and still.

Dutchy-Dan backed away from the bucket and climbed quickly aboard the cart. The donkey was still hee-hawing as the reins were lifted and pulled.

" Good-day, and thank you," cried the cottager.

" Good-day to you. Are those potatoes all right ? Just lift one out of the bucket to make sure."

"Why should I?" she replied. But she plunged an arm into the water and drew out the largest. A plain potato it was, and nothing but a plain potato.

"Well, I suppose I've got a touch of the sun," said Dutchy-Dan. "Gee-up, Clop. Get on, *do*, and stop that everlasting hee-hawing noise. It's enough to make me delirious."

* * * * *

Clopety-clop! Clopety-clop!

All along the lanes the donkey trotted, talking at such a rate, and with such ponderously long words, that perhaps it is lucky Dutchy-Dan heard nothing but hee-hawing. No one else heard anything either—not even the milkman who came running out from the cowsheds.

"Oh, here you are at last," he said. "I began to think you'd forgotten I'd ordered a marrow. What is your donkey hee-hawing about?"

"I don't know. But he's stopped now, and a good thing too. A marrow, did you say? Here's a beauty, all yellow and ripe, and a perfect shape!"

Dutchy-Dan lifted a monster marrow from the cart, but scarcely had his fingers touched it than it began to float in the air like a balloon.

"Come down!" cried Dutchy-Dan. But the marrow showed two gleaming eyes and two rows of bristling teeth. It hovered in the sunshine like a lazy, wingless bird.

"Oh—oh—I've had *enough* of this kind of thing," moaned poor Dutchy-Dan, tearing at his hair. "I must be sickening for some kind of fever. Come down! Come down!"

"Hee-haw!" said the donkey suddenly.



Began to float in the air like a balloon.

Immediately the marrow stopped its antics. The eyes and teeth vanished, and the monster vegetable made a sudden arc-like plunge, landing snugly in a waiting basket.

"I didn't ask you to *toss* it," complained the milkman. "You may be a fine shot, but bruising a marrow does it no good."

"Take it out of the basket, and see if it is all right," said Dutchy-Dan.

"Certainly I will."

The milkman lifted the marrow in his hands—and sure enough it was all right. It was just a fine, ripe marrow, and nothing more.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!" said the donkey.

* * * * *

Dutchy-Dan climbed aboard his cart quicker than he had ever climbed before. "Gee-up, Clopety!" he said wildly. "Get me away from this place as quickly as you can. Something must be wrong with my eyes. Did that marrow fly in the air, or did my sight deceive me? Upon my word, that incessant hee-hawing of yours is enough to drive me crazy."

"I'm the one who ought to grumble," cried the transformed schoolmaster, who was getting hoarse. "Do you think I like masquerading in this ridiculous fashion? Do you think I enjoy being driven for miles in the broiling sun. I've told you, over and over again, that I'm *not* Clop the donkey. I know I look like him, but that's not my fault."

"Oh, *stop* hee-hawing! Stop it, I say!" cried Dutchy-Dan. "There's another customer waiting to be served—over at the colonel's house. For goodness' sake be quiet while I serve her."

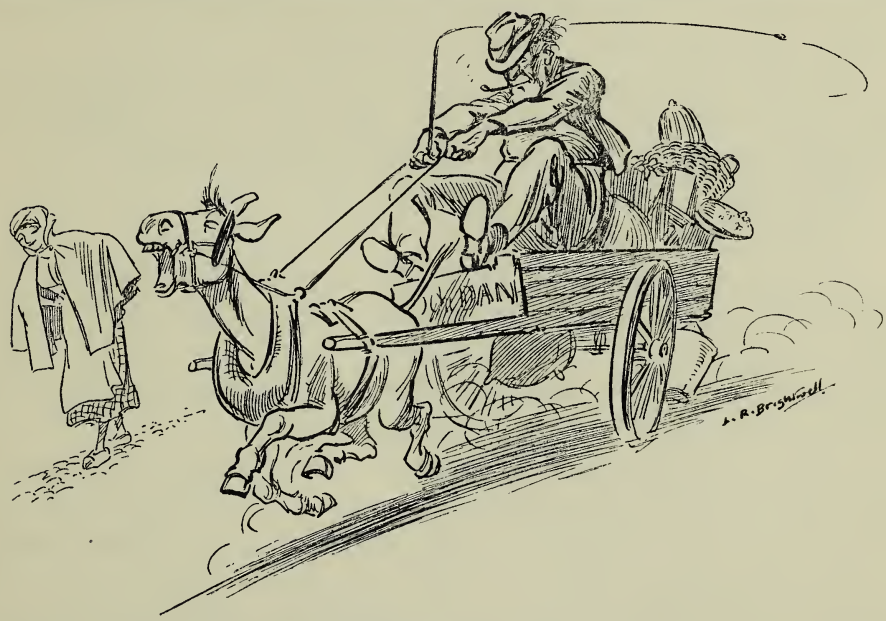
The cart stopped. The donkey ceased braying. The colonel's cook stood behind the gate, with a basket on the ground beside her.

"You're late," she began.

"Yes, I know. What can I serve you with?"

"A peck of green peas."

Dutchy-Dan lifted the measure from behind the apple-barrel, and opened the basket of peas. But no sooner was the



lid lifted than the peapods flowed like a sudden river, filling the peck measure to the brim.

Then there came five, ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred popping sounds, like a fusillade of pigmy guns. Each peapod burst open, and out sprang the bright green peas in a merry shower. Like bullets they shot at Dutchy-Dan, rattling on his buttons, and thudding on his coat like a hailstorm.

Bounce, bounce, bounce! Like bewitched marbles!

Dutchy-Dan stared with his mouth agape, for the ground at his feet was alive with leap-frogging balls, all having the jolliest time.

"Oh stop! Stop your antics!" he cried, clutching at a bewildered brow. "Stop! *Stop!*"

"Hurry with those peas," called the colonel's cook from the gateway. "I'm late with the dinner already. How much longer will you take to measure one peck?"

Dutchy-Dan stooped and tried to smother the dancing peas with his hands and elbows. But like elfins they dodged him, hopping and spinning around him in a giddy whirl.

Suddenly a noise came from the cart.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!"

The peas seemed to understand, for they immediately stopped their hopping. In less than a second they were ranged into a double row. As straight as an arrow they marched between the posts of the gateway, and in another moment the basket of the colonel's cook was nicely filled.

"Well, that's a new way to serve customers with peas," said the astonished and delighted cook. "All shucked, and ready for use! I call it very kind of you. What nimble fingers you must have, to shell a whole peck so quickly! And how clever you must be, to get them all into my basket without my seeing."

"Are they all right?" stammered Dutchy-Dan.

"Yes."

She lifted a handful to make sure, letting the crisp peas slip through her fingers like a shower. And indeed, they were fine green peas, and nothing more.

* * * * *

Dutchy-Dan scrambled aboard the cart and pulled at the reins like a man in a frenzy. For two miles he drove without stopping, and all along the road the sound of hee-hawing kept him company. It was a hoarse and dry kind of hee-hawing now, for the throat of the false donkey was beginning to feel like sandpaper.

The day was very hot. The sun was blazing from a cloudless sky. Not a breath of wind disturbed the calm of the mellow afternoon.

" Whew ! I want a rest," murmured Dutchy-Dan.

He drew up at a spot where a mighty elm threw a patch of turf-carpeted shade. He mopped at his face with a large red kerchief. He climbed down from his seat and drew a bottle of cider from beneath a sack.

" I expect you are thirsty too," he said to the donkey. " If you were a sensible animal I could let you loose for a bit. You could run down to the brook and get a drink, but, as you are a stupid, runaway ass, you've got to stay harnessed."

" I'm *not* a stupid, runaway ass. I've told you over and over again. Let me free ! I want a drink !" cried the tormented animal.

" Stop that hee-hawing, and I'll fetch you some water in a tin can," said Dutchy-Dan.

" Hee-haw ! The way you treat me is disgraceful !"

" If you don't stop braying you'll get no drink."

Fumbling among the contents of the cart, Dutchy-Dan found a large tin bowl, which he carried to the brook and filled with water. The braying sound followed him down, but it ceased as he returned.

He lifted the bowl to Clop's nose, and the animal drank till the water was gone.

" There ! Now we'll have a rest !" said Dutchy-Dan.

He climbed at the back among the sacks, and settled himself for a nap. Through half-open eyes he looked sleepily at his store.

* * * * *

Surely that box of apples ought to be standing the other way up ! What was it doing with a tiny door ? And a tiny window ? *Was* it a box of apples, with the fruit in orderly rows ? Or was it a room ?

Surely—surely those were not apples, but rosy-cheeked maidens, sitting in desks, with their heads bent over sheets of paper, and—yes—each holding a pencil, ready for writing.

Was that a cauliflower, or a white-wigged professor, perched high in front ?

Was that a cabbage, or a green-capped games-master, talking to another with a cap of paler hue ?

What *were* those empty peapods doing ? What possessed them to line up outside the schoolroom ? Fifteen a side, all glaring at one another ! Why did they suddenly dash higgledy-piggledy together, in a wild scramble for one small onion ?

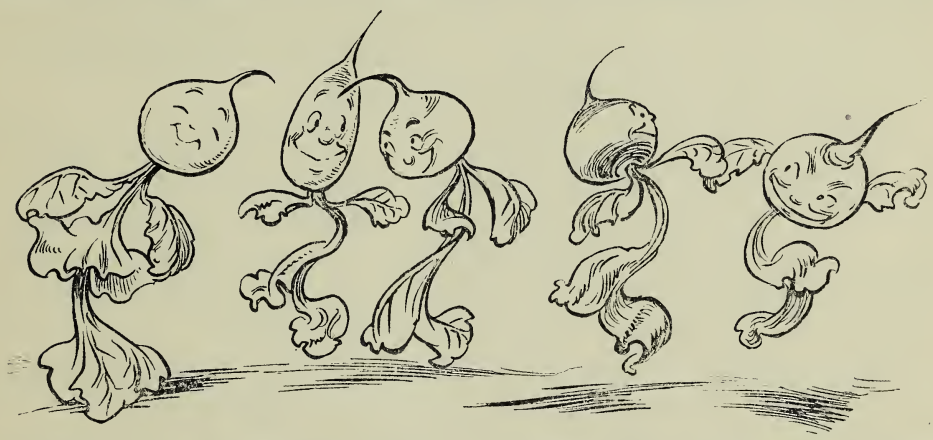
What was happening to the walnuts ? Why did they hop about, waving arms that sprouted from goodness-knows-where ? *What* a crowd of them ! All pushing for a place in the front row, where the view of the match was best. What match ? Why, the rugger match, of course ! Fifteen a side, with an onion for the ball.

Dutchy-Dan's eyes grew wide with astonishment. Scarcely did he dare to breathe, for the schoolroom door was opening. A stick of celery came through the doorway.

Was it a stick of celery, or a tall, strutting fellow clad in whites, with a stiff crease down each trouser leg?

Surely he was in a temper about something! Look at that untidy stick of horse-radish following him! Or was that the history master, dragged away from his books? See how they strode towards the football match—and see how rapidly those walnuts have scuttled away, like naughty boys at a forbidden game.

Was it a forbidden game? *Of course!* Football in the summer! Right in the middle of the cricket-pitch too! No



wonder those emerald-capped players were so angry. *Were* they cricketers, or merely heads of asparagus?

Did someone ring a bell? Or did the dozing donkey rattle his harness?

Dutchy-Dan raised his eyes and looked at Clop. Certainly the donkey was three parts asleep, lolling against the shafts. Inside the cart something miraculous had happened. The watercress had arranged itself into a circular hedge, with a grassy lawn enclosed. People were dancing on the lawn.

Were they people, or merely carrots and turnips, spinning on their points in a double maze, like folks at a fair?

Why were those radishes dancing behind so merrily, mocking their steps like saucy schoolboys on a half-holiday?

Dutchy-Dan gazed wildly about him. Everything seemed wrong. Nothing was where it ought to have been. Nothing was doing what it ought to have been doing.

Every box had turned into a bungalow. The scale-weights had reared themselves into a tall pagoda where a party of oranges was buying ice-cream. Cherries were riding round rhubarb-sticks in wild merry-go-rounds, that spun in the hot air like jewelled rings of flame. Round and round and round.

Dutchy-Dan grew dizzy as he watched.

"Stop!" he cried. "All of you are bewitched! Wake up, Clopety, and take me home! Wake up! *Wake up!*"

"Why can't you let me sleep in peace?" said the donkey. But the only sound which he made was a drowsy hee-haw. The occupants of the cart seemed to hear it, however, for they stopped their mad capering and kept very still.

Dutchy-Dan leaped down from the cart. He took hold of Clopety by the ears and shook him, and shook him.

"*Wake up! Wake up!*"

The donkey snorted with anger. He kicked and he heaved. He swished his tail. He pranced in the air like a circus pony. Up and down went the shafts of the cart. A box of tomatoes fell into the roadway with a thud, and all the young tomatoes began pelting one another with sawdust.

"Stop—stop—stop!" cried Dutchy-Dan.

"Not *me!*" said the animal fiercely. "How *dare* you wake me up from my forty winks! Do you expect a schoolmaster

to stand such treatment? You've harnessed me to this cart, and you'll have to bear the consequences."

Next instant he was off down the lane.

"*Hi—stop!* Wait for me! You're going the wrong way!" shouted Dutchy-Dan. But cart and donkey went swinging round the bend and out of sight.

* * * * *

All that afternoon Dutchy-Dan ran to and fro, hunting for a runaway donkey and a bewitched market cart. For miles and miles he tramped, and at last he reached the house on the hill where Old Wisey the schoolmaster dwelt.

Mrs. Wisey was at the gate, shading her eyes against the brilliance of the sunset. For evening had almost gone, and the sky was aflame with good-night glory.

"Oh, Dutchy-Dan, have you seen my husband?" cried Mrs. Wisey. "He's been missing since morning."

"Have you seen my donkey?" said Dutchy-Dan. "He's been missing since afternoon."

"Don't mention the word 'donkey' to me," cried Mrs. Wisey. "I've had enough of 'donkey.' A perfectly wild specimen came ramping into this garden at tea-time."

"What for?"

"I don't know."

"Was he harnessed to a market cart?"

"He was. And he is still. If you look yonder you'll see him. If you listen you'll hear him braying."

Dutchy-Dan gave a gleeful shout.

"That's the fellow! That's old Clopety!" he cried, and he vaulted over the gate.

There stood the market cart in a sadly damaged geranium-bed. The hind-legs of a braying donkey were kicking wildly on the pathway, while the animal's head and fore-legs were over the sill of the drawing-room window.

"He's trying to get into your house," said Dutchy-Dan.

"Yes, I know. He's been trying for hours."

"Why didn't you stop him?"

"I was afraid he'd bite me. He looks so wild. Please get him out before my husband arrives."

"Shall I back him through the window?"

"I've tried that way, but he won't come."

"Shall I drag him clean into the room?"

"I've tried that way, but the cart won't go through."

"I suppose I must unharness him, then," said Dutchy-Dan gloomily. "Hold tight to his collar while I unfasten the buckling. Keep still, Clop! Keep still! A pretty dance you've led me today, you worthless rascal!"

Bit by bit he loosened the straps and pulled the cart away.

"He's kicking!" cried Mrs. Wisey.

"I can see he's kicking. Don't let go of him!"

"He's pulling my arm out by the joints. *Oh*—he's got loose! He's jumped through the window into my drawing-room. *Oh*, he's trying to sit down in my husband's chair."

"Let him try," muttered Dutchy-Dan. "Shut the window and the door, and we've got him! Thank goodness for that!"

"It's all very well for you," wailed Mrs. Wisey. "But what will my husband say to me when he comes home? Do

you think he *likes* donkeys in his drawing-room? Oh dear! I can hear his voice in the lane. He's coming——"

* * * * *

Could that be Old Wisey standing by the gate?

Why didn't he come in?

Why were two men holding him by the arms?

What were they saying?

"This is your home, Wisey. Be sensible, and go in. Have a day or two in bed, out of the heat of the sun."

"Oh—oh—there's a donkey in the drawing-room!" cried Mrs. Wisey, half bursting into tears.

"A *donkey?*" cried the man, and he dashed through the gateway. He stooped and peered into the dimness of the room, and as he gazed the last rays of the setting sun sent a flash of crimson against the glass of the window.

The animal in the room blinked, and his eyes met those of the man outside.

And then, in an instant, something miraculous happened.

Clop turned back into Old Wisey, and Old Wisey turned back into Clop.

Both of them knew it, too. And there was a donkey looking dazedly through the window, and a very weary schoolmaster sitting in the armchair.

* * * * *

"*Well!*" gasped the onlookers.

But Clop the donkey had seen the market cart, with the dangling straps waiting to be buckled.

"Hee-haw—that looks like work," he thought, and he commenced to trot towards the gate.

"Stop him!" shouted Dutchy-Dan. But it was too late. The runaway donkey was living up to his name.

* * * * *

And as for Old Wisey—that night he rummaged among his oldest books, reading and reading until long after most



folks were abed. His wife trimmed the lamp and kept it bright as he hunted through page after page of legend.

At last he found what he wanted. Mrs. Wisey put her head close to his, and together they read the story of Turnabout Stile.

And if you could have watched them, you would have seen them gaze in awe at one another. You would have seen them stand up, and pass through the doorway into the starry night. And presently you would have heard sounds of wrenching wood.

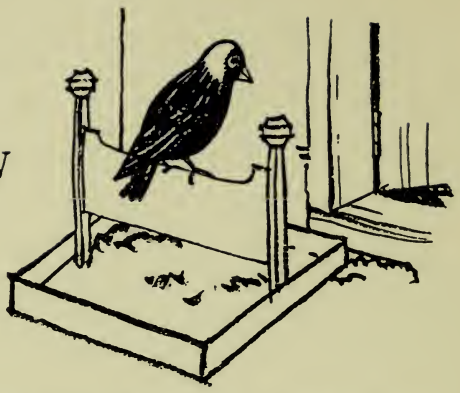
Then you would have smelt the smoke of burning wood. You would have seen bright tongues of flame licking around planks that had once been a stile—planks which had once been a fence around a witch's house.



THREE BIRDS

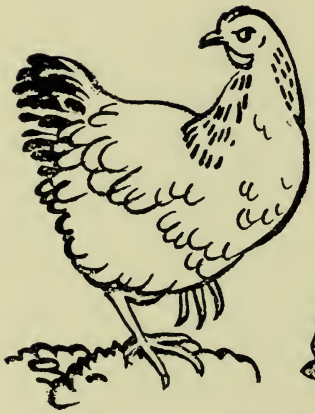
By

E. R. P. BERRYMAN



OUTSIDE the back-door
Sits Mister Jackdaw,
Outside the front-door
Struts an old hen;

Outside the side-door
(Not a very wide door)
Sitting on a tree-top
Sings little Jenny Wren.



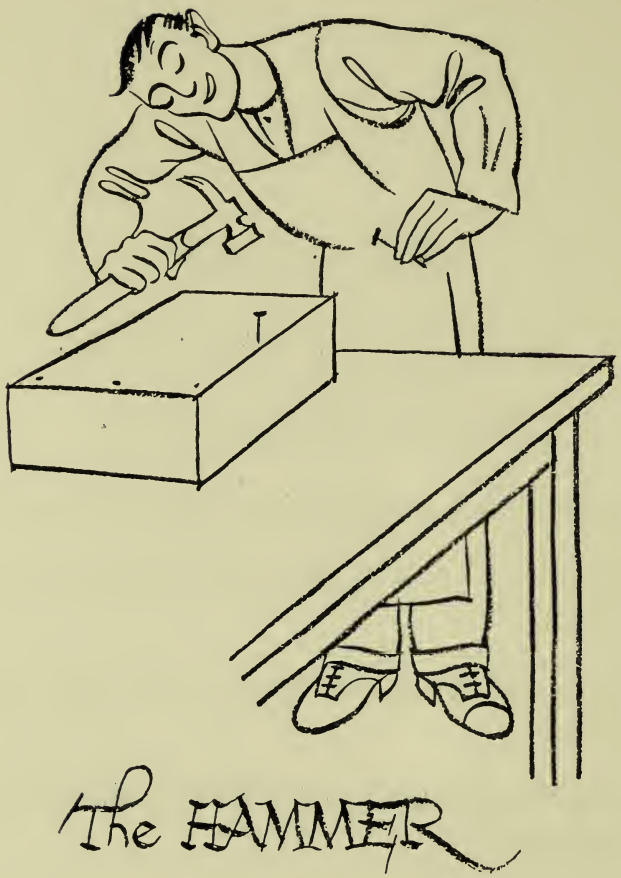


NICE NOISES

By E. R. P. BERRYMAN

PICTURES BY THOMAS DERRICK

THE tools in the potting-shed they all started jabbering,
Arguing which made the noise that people liked the best:
The gardener had gone to tea, so no one heard them blabbering,
And no one knows quite *what* they said, but this is what I've guessed.



The Hammer said, " I rather doubt if anyone can fail
To appreciate the noise I make when driving in a nail:
It's clean and crisp and workmanlike, tho' its true I've heard it said
By foolish folk that hammering goes throbbing thro' their head."



The Saw replied, " I cannot say that I agree with you—
Now *mine's* a noise that nobody can take exception to:
It's neither harsh nor rasping; it's as if the log were sighing
As I saw him into little bits and send the sawdust flying."



" Maybe you're right," remarked the Axe, " but what can be so good

As the steady thud of axe-strokes in a clearing in the wood ?

And the white chips go a-flying like comets thro' the air

Till the mighty tree comes crashing down, a fallen monarch there !"



The SCYTHE

Then said the Scythe—an oldish man—" I can't say much because
These modern days I'm not in use so frequent as I was:
But folk of old was privileged, indeed they was, to hear
My blade go swishing thro' the grass to sweep the meadow clear."



The LAWN-MOWER

The Mower said, " In summer-time, when noon to evening fades,
And the bee's along the border, you can hear my whirring blades,
As soothing as a lullaby, and nowhere can be found
In all the world so homely, such a really English sound. "

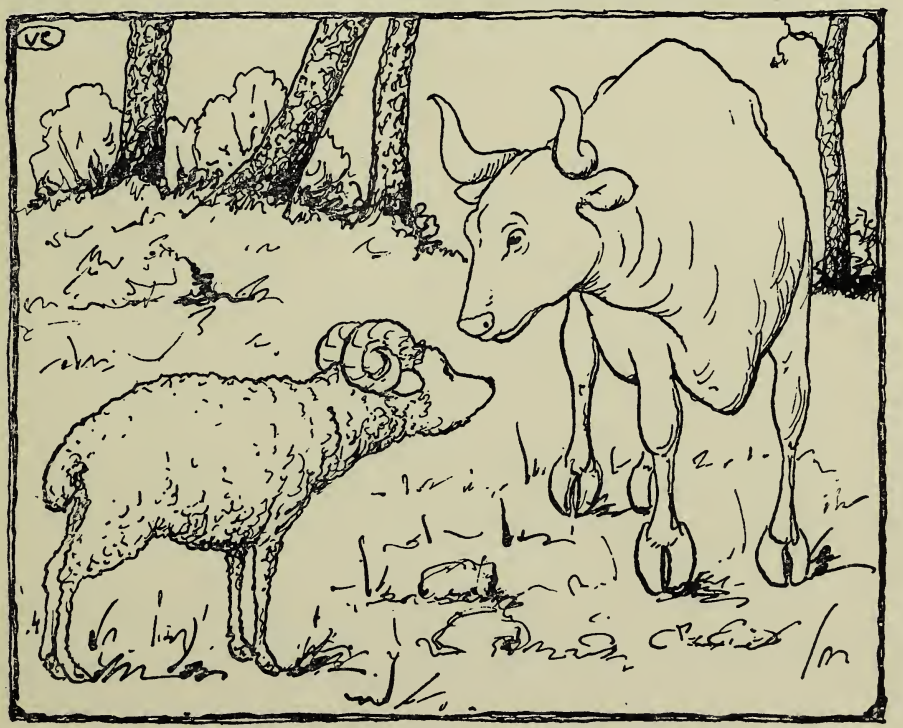
THE ANIMALS' WINTER QUARTERS



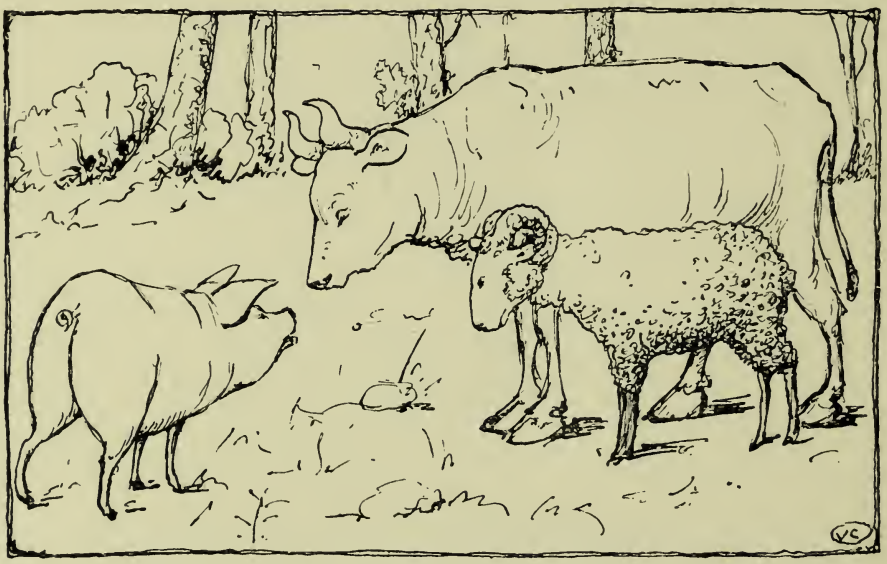
A Russian Folk-Tale

By VALERY CARRICK

AN ox was walking through the forest one day, when he met a sheep. He asked him: "Where are you going, Mr. Sheep?" "I'm going away from winter to look for summer," answered he. "Then let's go together," said the ox. So they set off together, when presently they met a



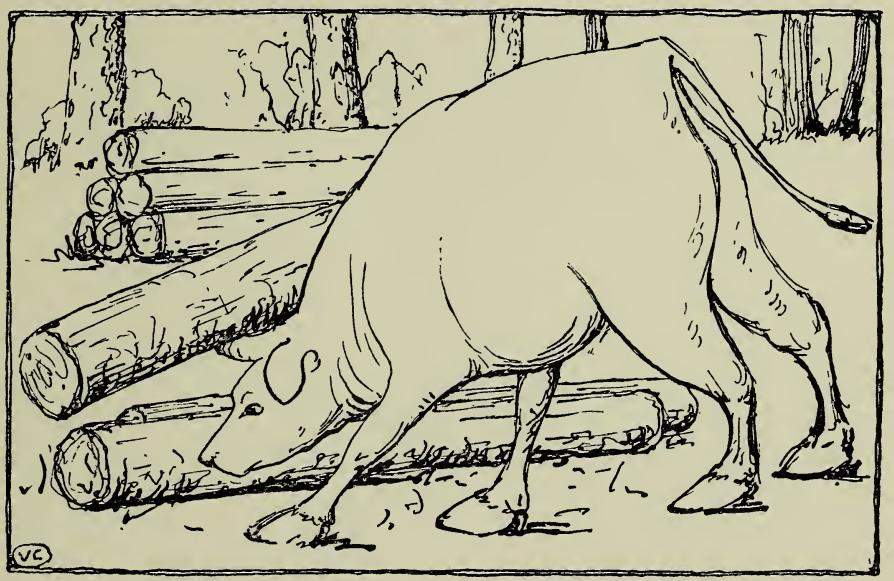
pig. "Where are you going, Mr. Pig?" they asked. "I'm going away from winter to look for summer," answered he. "Then come with us!" said they. So they set off all three together. Presently they met a goose. "Where are you going, Mr. Goose?" asked they. "I'm going away from winter to look for summer." "Then come along with us!" they replied. And so the goose set off with them too. They



went on and on, when suddenly they met a cock. "Where are you going, Mr. Cock?" they asked. "I'm going away from winter to look for summer," answered he. "Then come with us!" they said.

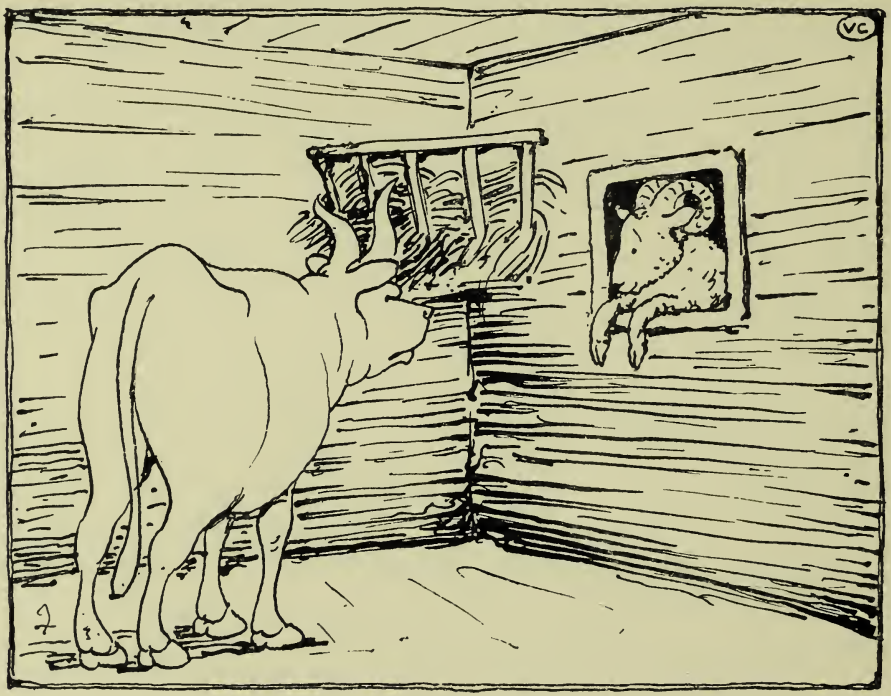
So they all went on with their journey together. They went on and on, and presently the ox said: "Well, my friends, where are we going to look for this warmth we've all been talking about? It doesn't look as if we were

getting any nearer to it! The cold weather's coming on, let's build ourselves a hut, or else we shall simply all get frozen." But the sheep said: "What do *I* want with a hut? I've got a warm fur coat on; I shall pass the winter all right as I am!" Then the pig said: "And why should *I* fear the frost? I shall just dig myself into the ground and then I'll be warm; *I* don't need any hut!" Then the goose said:



"And I'll creep under a fir-tree, tuck one wing under me, and cover myself with the other, and then the hardest frost in the world won't touch me!" Then the cock said: "And I've got my wings too—I shan't get frost-bitten under them; I shall pass the winter all right without a hut." "Very well," answered the ox, "you can all do as you like, but I'm going to build a hut."

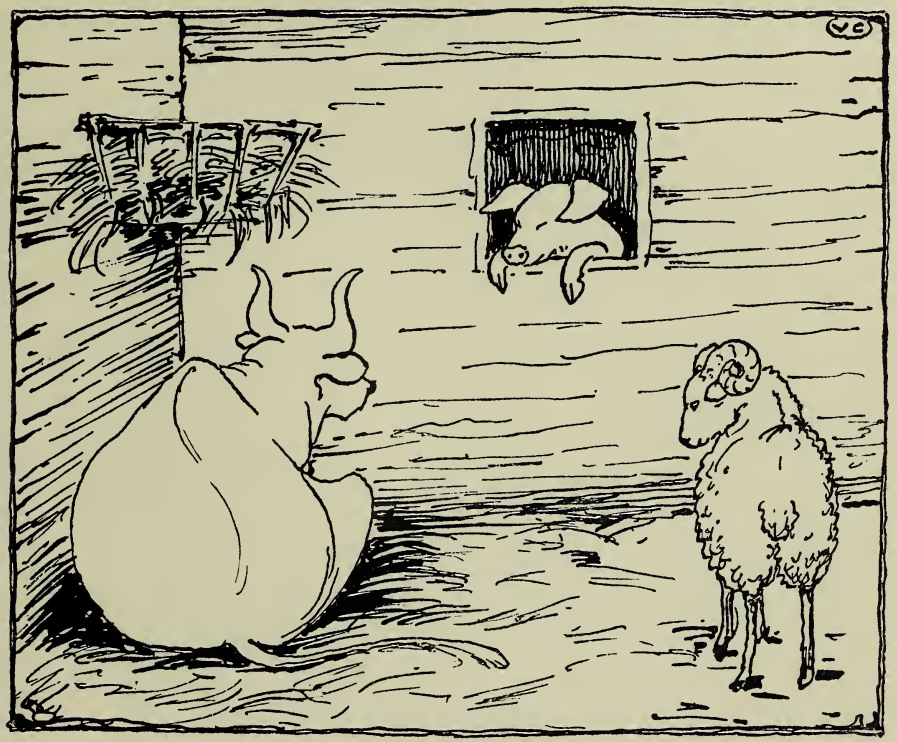
So the ox set about building his hut. He finished building it and started living in it. Then the winter came. So severe were the frosts that the sheep couldn't stand it, and so he began to beg the ox: " Please let me in, Mr. Ox, to warm myself a bit !" " Well, but I thought you said you'd



got a warm fur coat !" replied he. " You didn't help build the hut, so now you can stop out of doors; I won't let you in !" " Well, if you won't let me in," said the sheep, " I'll ram your logs out of the walls, and then you'll get frost-bitten !"

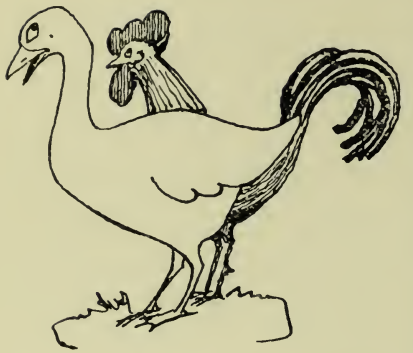
At that the ox thought for a minute: there was no help for it, he must let the sheep in. So he let the sheep into the hut,

and they started living together. Then the pig got perished with cold, and came up to the hut, saying: " Mr. Ox, please let me in to warm myself a bit!" " Well, but you said you were going to dig yourself into the ground! You said you weren't afraid of the winter, so now you can just stop out of



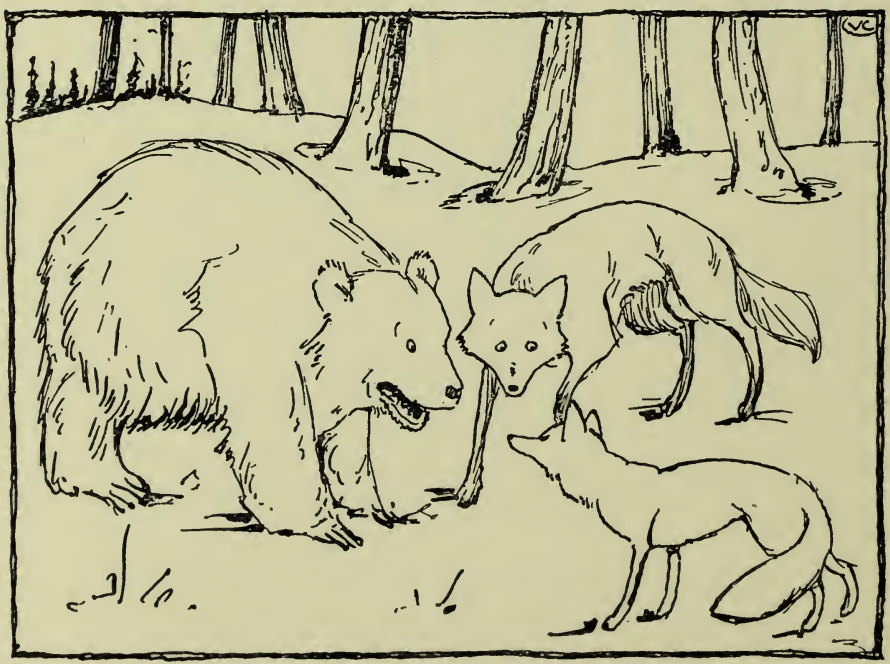
doors; I won't let you in!" " Well, if you won't let me in," said the pig, " I'll rout under your hut, and it'll all tumble down!"

There was no help for it, and the ox had to let the pig in too. Not long after that, up came the goose and the cock



to the window, and said: "Let us in, Mr. Ox, to warm ourselves a bit!" "Well, but what about your wings? You said you'd tuck one under you and cover yourself with the other, so now you can just spend the night out of doors, I won't let you in!" "Well, if you don't," said they, "we'll peck all the moss out of the walls of your hut which you laid between the logs, and we'll scrape down all the earth off the roof which you spread over it, and then you'll feel the cold nicely too!"

There was no help for it, so the ox let in the goose and the cock too. And there they were all living together



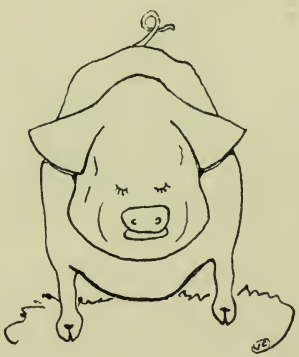
in the hut. And the cock, when he had got nice and warm, began to sing his songs, and the fox, when he heard the cock singing songs, thought how much he would like to taste a bit of cock's flesh, but he was afraid to go up to the hut alone. So he went off to the bear and the wolf and said to them: "Well, my friends, I've found a good meal for us all:



an ox for you, Bruin, a sheep for you, Mr. Wolf, and a cock and a goose for myself." Then he led them up to the hut, and Bruin said to Mr. Wolf: "You go first!" But Mr. Wolf answered: "No, you go! You're stronger!" "All right!" said Bruin. So he went forward. But as soon as he got inside the door the ox went for him with his horns and fastened him to the wall. The sheep took a run and started

ramming the bear. The pig began to tear Bruin's coat in shreds; the goose flew on to his head and started pecking his eyes, and the cock flew up on to the manger and began to crow at the top of his voice. It was all Bruin could do to free himself and get back through the door.

Then the bear, the wolf, and the fox all gathered together again, and the bear began to tell his experiences. "A nice time I had of it," said he; "no sooner had I gone in than someone pinned me with a pitchfork to the wall. Swarms of others attacked me, some beating me, others tearing my coat, and others pricking my eyes. And the worst one of them all was shouting in the corner: "Bring him right along here! Bring him right along here!"





THE HAPPY COBBLER

By ROY MELDRUM

ONCE upon a time there was a little Cobbler, who was never so happy as when he was making a shoe.

"Listen to little old Jeremy," said his neighbours, "the way he sings the throat of a thrush dry. Who would ever think he was a lonely man, and his only son lost on the high seas these many years? And yet he's always singing, always happy, always at work. He's the happiest man in the kingdom."

Now when the King heard that old Jeremy the Cobbler was the happiest man in the kingdom, he was a little vexed, thinking that nobody should be happier than the King himself, and when Jeremy came singing into the palace with a new pair of shoes, he thought to play a trick on him.

"I have given your Majesty plenty of room for the hump on your first toe," said Jeremy, humming merrily as he fitted on the right shoe.

But the King did not like to think that he had a hump on any of his toes, and was still more vexed and determined to play a trick on the Cobbler.

" They tell me," he said, " that you are the happiest man in my kingdom, Jeremy."

" I believe I am," said the Cobbler.

" Then you are the man I should choose to wed the most beautiful woman in my kingdom," said the King.

" But that is your eldest daughter," said the Cobbler.

" That is my eldest daughter," said the King; " but you know she has a mole on the tip of her nose."

" A very, very small mole," said the Cobbler.

" But just enough to prevent her being the most beautiful woman in the world. Now," said the King, " there is only one thing that will take away that mole—a drop of cream from the herd of cows which belongs to Giant Caxtacrax; and if you can bring me that, then the Princess shall be your bride."

" And where does the Giant live?" asked Jeremy, his lips trembling with the wonder of the hour.

" That you must find out," said the King, and dismissed him.

To marry a princess! To marry a princess! Jeremy could not work any more that day, nor could he sleep that night, neither did he sing; he was too topsy-turvy inside to do anything but repeat, " A drop of cream—a drop of cream from the Giant's cows."

In the morning he did not open the shutters of his shop, but, putting a loaf and a small cheese in a clean handkerchief, he set out on his journey, and first he went to the Royal Library to find out the Giant's address.

" I want a book of giants' addresses," he said to the Librarian.

The Librarian, who was a learned man, looked with scorn and pity at the little Cobbler.

" You want a book of myths," he said, " and we have no room for them here."

" And what is a myth ?" said Jeremy.

" You had better look in the catalogue under letter M," said the Librarian, and waved the Cobbler out of his sight.

" What a waste of leather !" sighed Jeremy, as he walked past thousands and thousands of books, all standing silent and dusty, and nowhere could he find what he wanted. " It seems I am lost before I have begun my journey. I had better have been making a shoe this morning," and he looked through a narrow window to see if the sun was still shining.

At that moment a crow flew down from the sky, lit on the window-sill, cawed, and tapped boldly on the glass.

Jeremy opened the window.

" Swallow this and get on my back," said the crow, and he held a red berry in the tip of his beak.

" But I am trying to find a giant," said Jeremy.

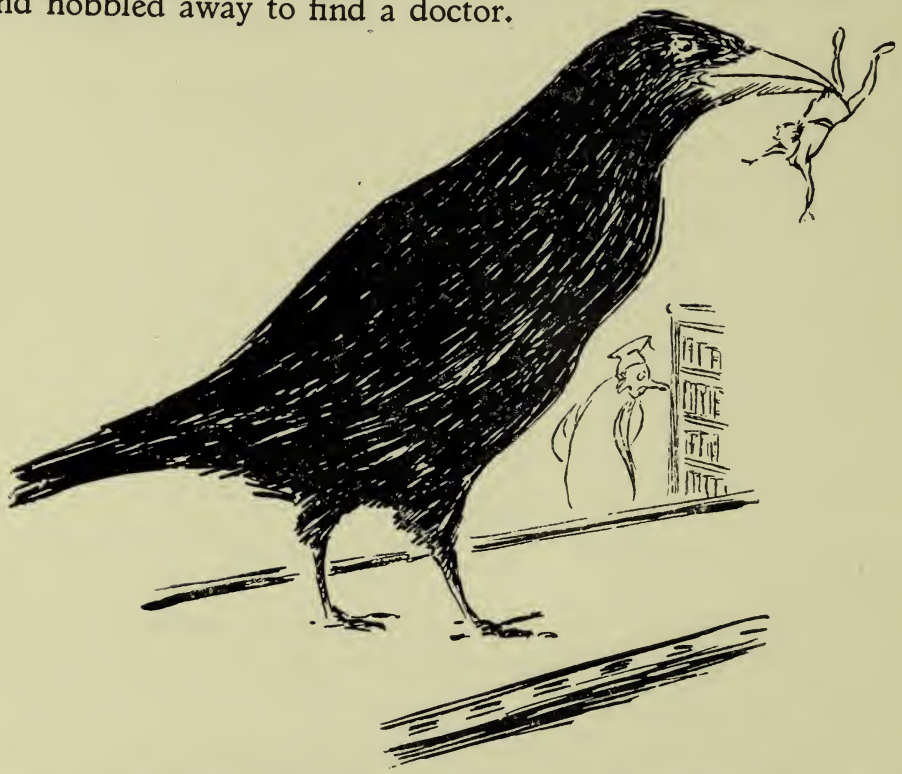
" I have been deaf for fifty years," said the crow; " swallow this and get on my back."

He has rather a friendly look, thought Jeremy, and took the berry. " But if I get on your back," he said, " I shall fall and break my neck."

" Swallow," said the crow, and at the same time he strode through the window, and seized the Cobbler by the sleeve. " If you are afraid of a crow, you are no man to go in search of a giant."

Hearing this Jeremy at once swallowed the berry, and lo ! in an instant he had shrunk so much that his feet left the floor and he found himself dangling like a cherry from the crow's bill.

And when the Librarian, feeling a draught, came up to find out who had opened a window, he saw a large black crow fly away, and on its back, clasping its neck, a little man no more than six inches in height. " I must be ill," he moaned, and hobbled away to find a doctor.



With his slow and steady wings the crow flew on all day and all night, and the next morning Jeremy saw below them an immense castle on the edge of a forest, and the crow circled slowly down to the foot of a tall pine tree. " I shall come to this tree," he said, " at sunset, and then not for a year. Take nothing from the Giant but one drop of cream." And he flew away.

" Nothing but one drop of cream," said Jeremy. " I must remember that. One drop of cream," and he set out for the castle singing like a little grasshopper. Ah ! if only he could have jumped like a grasshopper instead of running slower than an ant on the great wide road, on which every mile was to him as big as ten. He was very foot-sore when he came to the meadow in front of the castle, and when he saw a herd of cows there, larger than elephants, he fell to his knees, crying, " What strength have I against these great tongues ? One swishing lick, and I am turned into cud."

And while he was kneeling there, the Giant came out of the castle, munching a fish-pie and thinking of nothing but how good fish-pies were when nicely cooked, and without looking where he stepped, strode straight over the grass towards Jeremy.

Jeremy was now caught between the Giant and the cows, and he lay down to die, wondering sadly why he had come so far from home and whether it would be better to be chewed or trodden to death.

" I don't like to think of so much weight on my back," he sighed, and he was still sighing when the earth seemed to leap in his face, and a great cry for help thundered in his ears, and he saw the Giant close by rolling and writhing on the grass.

What a mass of pain there must be in so many stones of body, thought Jeremy, and full of pity he ran to the Giant and asked if he could help him.

The Giant, hearing a tiny voice, pointed to his mouth.

" He's choking," cried Jeremy, " and if I don't do something at once, he will surely die." And he climbed the

Giant's beard, and seizing hold of a tooth dragged himself into the big open mouth and began to crawl along the big white teeth.



" Ha ! there is the trouble," said Jeremy, peering down the Giant's throat. " You have swallowed a fish-bone," and twining his legs round the last tooth, he leaned forward and grasped one end of the fish-bone in his hands, and with jerks

and pulls and screwings, tugged it loose. The next moment he was blown high into the air, and the Giant had breathed again.

"What are you, that have saved my life?" said the Giant, sitting up.

"A Cobbler by trade," said Jeremy, rubbing his head tenderly.



"Then, Cobbler by trade, ask me for whatever you wish. You have earned it."

"I want one drop of your cows' cream," said Jeremy, "and a little water to wash in."

"Come with me," said the Giant, picking him up in his hand. "I will give you what you want and more, and you shall stay with me for ever."

"But I must go before sunset," pleaded Jeremy; at which the Giant was grieved, and he was still more grieved when Jeremy would not take more than one drop of cream out of

all the sweet, cool gallons, which stood in crocks round the great white dairy.

"But how will you carry it?" said the Giant. "I have no bottle less than this," and he pointed to a bottle



the size of a milk-churn, and six times as big as Jeremy himself.

"I will find a nut and bore out the kernel," said Jeremy, "and seal it with wax."

And, having done this, he was ready to bid the Giant farewell.

"Alas! I have taken a great fancy to you, Cobbler," said the Giant, setting him in the palm of his hand, "and I should like you to stay with me. But since you will not stay, remember this: if ever you are in trouble, call out my name clearly and quickly three times and I will send you help." And he gave Jeremy such a friendly squeeze that the breath went out of him, and he thought his ribs were broken.

"No," said the Giant, "I see it is better that we should part. Great and small cannot live together. Alas! But if you do not wish to offend me, I insist that you take one gift from me—in remembrance of a grateful Giant." And he brought out of his pocket a diamond as large as a duck's egg.

"Ah!" cried Jeremy, blinking at its light, "with such a jewel I should be richer than the King himself," and he no longer remembered what the crow had told him, but took the diamond; and after the Giant had carried him past the herd of cows, they said farewell.

Now, thought Jeremy, looking at the sky, the sun is still many hours from setting. I will sleep for a little and then wake fresh and find my journey easier.

So he curled up under a fern and slept, and when he woke he saw that the sun was drawing near to the top of the forest trees, and he hastened on with vigorous steps.

"Here I am," he cried, as he saw the crow standing at the foot of the pine tree.

"Get on my back," said the crow.

"He is in a bad temper tonight," said Jeremy to himself, and obeyed at once, afraid that he might be left behind.

" So you forgot my words," said the crow.

" Now, let me see, what did I forget?" said Jeremy.

" And you have slept away a whole year under a fern-leaf," said the crow.

" I am very sorry," said Jeremy, not believing at all what the crow told him.

" You will be tomorrow," said the crow.

" I thought you were deaf."

" Deaf people can sometimes hear," said the crow, and after that he flew through the night in silence.

And before the sun set again, they reached the King's city, and after giving Jeremy a blue berry to swallow, the crow flew away.

How pleasant it is to be my usual size, thought Jeremy, and how pleasant it is to see my workshop again; and he picked up a half-finished shoe and began to hammer at the sole and sing, until the neighbours all flocked in to see what had happened to him for a whole year.

A whole year! Then the crow had spoken the truth.

" I have been staying with giants," said Jeremy proudly. " So ask me no questions." And when they had gone he bolted his door, and spent the night burying his diamond under the floor of the shop, and as soon as morning came he hurried off to the palace.

" So you are back again," said the King, " and none too soon, Master Cobbler, for I have been waiting a month for a pair of new shoes."

" I am a little late, but I have brought the cream, your Majesty," said Jeremy.

" Cream? What cream?"

" From the cows of Giant Caxtacrax."

" Indeed!" said the King. " And where is it?"

" In this nutshell, Sir," said Jeremy.

" And what is the cream for?" asked the King.

" Your Majesty will remember saying a year ago, that if I brought one drop of cream to remove the mole from the tip of your eldest daughter's nose——"

" Ah yes, now," interrupted the King, " I do remember something of that kind," and he had the Princess summoned to his presence.

" This is the cream, my dear," said the King, " which our little friend the cobbler has kindly brought for your nose."

Jeremy bowed low, and kept his eyes fixed on the ground. To think that a Princess so dazzling in beauty was soon to become his bride!

The Princess took the nutshell and, piercing the wax seal, moistened the tip of her finger and touched the tip of her nose.

" Bring me a glass," she called to the Chamberlain.

The glass was brought, and when the Princess glanced into it, she suddenly lifted her drooping eyes, and cried, " It is gone!"

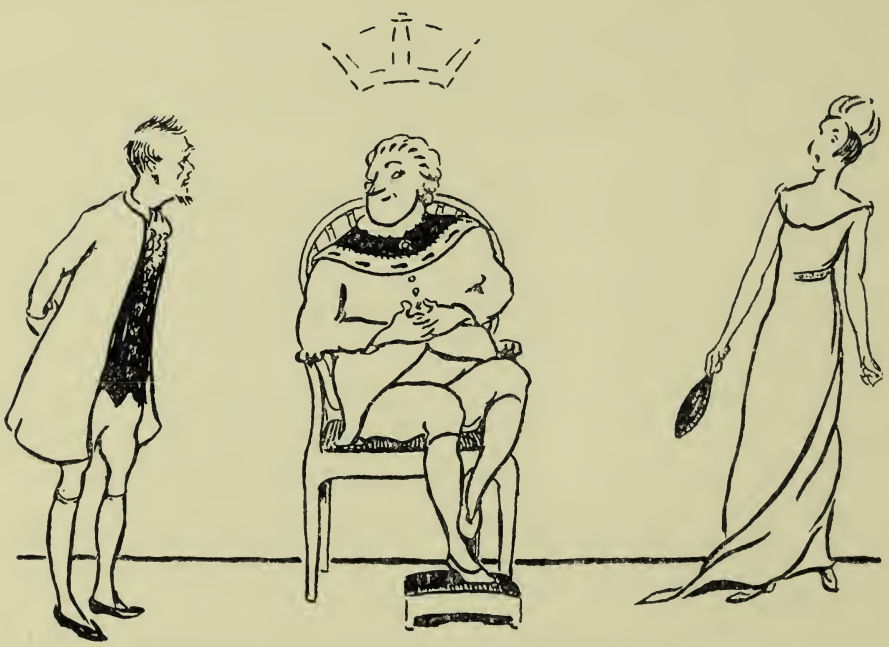
" Gone!" cried the King, and turning quickly to Jeremy he said: " We thank you most, most augustly, for the service you have rendered our daughter the Princess, and we shall have great pleasure in allowing you from this day forth to put the royal arms over the window of your shop, and for the future you shall have all, if not, almost all, our custom——"

" But——" said Jeremy.

"And I am thinking," concluded the King, "also of presenting you with a medal, a medal for honourable service, a medal of no less value than those which I bestow upon parsons and upon doctors——"

"But," stammered Jeremy, "your Majesty said I was to marry the Princess."

"Can I really have said that?" said the King.



"Impossible!" said the Princess, and flounced out of the room.

"But you did," said Jeremy.

"Yes, I believe I did," said the King; "but please keep your feet still. Yes, this is most unfortunate, most, and due entirely to your own sloth. You were so long in returning

that I had to allow my daughter to marry a neighbouring prince. However, I have a second daughter, who is even more beautiful than her sister, except that she has no hair on her head—and nothing can cure that, I am afraid, but a comb from the Mermaids of the Seven Islands. At the touch of that comb, I have no doubt, golden hair would grow in glorious golden curls——"

"And she would then be even more beautiful than her sister?" said Jeremy.

"Certainly more beautiful," said the King.

And away went Jeremy, happy to think that he had not married the eldest Princess, since her younger sister was going to be still more beautiful.

"So you were too late with the cream?" said a loud voice down his chimney that night.

"Who are you?" cried Jeremy, afraid that it was robbers come to steal his diamond.

"I have come to take you at once to the Seven Islands."

And when Jeremy looked out of the window he saw an albatross floating down to his door, and a lovely still fine moonlight night over everything.

"I am glad you have chosen good weather," he said, and seized a new loaf and went out, locking the door after him, and tying the key to his belt.

"Put on this cap," said the albatross, holding a little ball of silk in her beak, "and promise never to take it off until you return here again."

And Jeremy put on the cap and promised, and as soon as he had climbed between her wings she soared away to the sky. Day after day, seven days in all, she beat the air with

her strong white pinions, and the seas rolled unceasingly below them, and on the seventh evening she reached the Seven Islands, lying golden and restful upon the width of the ocean.

And Jeremy thought they seemed to be tinkling with little bells, and as he did not like the tinkling of little bells, he was glad to hear the albatross say that she would come again at dawn and take him away.

Then, seeing that the door-key was safe at his belt, he set out to look for mermaids, and where the long waves rolled lazily into a little bay, he saw five of them sitting together on the rocks. But when they saw him they dived straight into the water with no more fuss than five little pebbles fallen from a great height; and the long waves rolled lazily on, as though they knew nothing about the deep world below them.

"Yes, they have gone," sighed Jeremy. "Alas! Alas! How could I know that a mermaid was so shy?" And he stared at the sea, perplexed—and when Jeremy was perplexed his feet would be always moving, one nudging and asking questions of the other. So they were now—until they sent a little tinkling sound up to his ear, and he looked down and saw lying on the rock a golden comb.

"Oh, wonderful!" he cried, and stooped to pick it up. "Mermaids, I thank you," he said, and bowed to the waves.

"You cannot steal my comb," said a bright voice, and Jeremy's mouth opened, as he saw two arms glide over the rock at his feet, and he found himself gazing into a pretty face, wet and pink and glistening with the light of the setting sun.

"But I will pay for it," he gasped. "I have a diamond in my shop at home."

"Pay?" said the mermaid. "I would never dream of selling anything whatever to anybody."

"Oh, but you must," said Jeremy.

"Must?" the mermaid laughed—a very unpleasant tinkling voice, he thought.

"I am trying to be quite fair," he said," but, you see, you cannot stop me taking it if I wish to."

"Is that so?" The mermaid put her head coyly on one side. "I cannot stop a little bow-legged man taking my best comb, but I can—with a turn of my little finger I can wreck the proudest ship that sails the sea and drag her, masts and timbers and copper and treasures and guns and cargoes and captains and sailors and admirals too, if I think I will—I can drag them all to the bottom of the sea—but not, oh no, not one small ugly little man, who says he has a diamond at home—and who knows but thieves may not have stolen it by this time?"

"Oh, worse and worse and worse!" groaned Jeremy within, at every word the mermaid spoke, and he clutched his head in despair. If only she would swallow a fish-bone—and so easy to do with fish all round her in hundreds and thousands—then he could save her life and she would say, "I give you the comb."

And he was so busy thinking of this that he quite forgot his promise to the albatross, and pulled off his magic cap and straightway fell in love with the mermaid.

"I cannot wait for my comb much longer," she said.

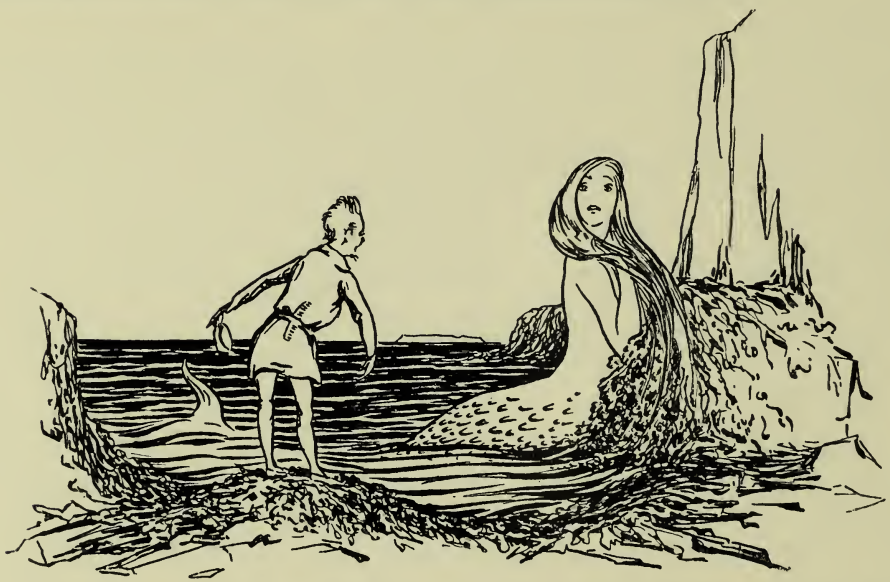
"Oh, pardon me," he cried, "but your voice is most angelic."

"That is a better way of speaking," said the mermaid; "but fine words alone will not help you."

"I know, I know," said Jeremy; "but if you would let me have this comb as a keepsake, I would do anything for you in the world that you asked me to do."

"Anything?" the mermaid smiled in surprise.

"Anything—because I never heard a lovelier voice than yours and never saw a face that pleased me better."



"Oh, then you must be one of the great heroes after all," said the mermaid.

"For your sake I would be greater than the greatest heroes," said Jeremy.

The mermaid flicked the water with her tail. "You must not try to break my heart," she said; "but perhaps you deserve a keepsake. I shall be very sorry to lose my comb, and I shall hate to think of others using it, but you may keep it on one condition."

" Only one ?" cried Jeremy.

" Just one. You must clean the rocks of the Seven Islands, strip away all seaweed from them and polish them smooth, so that they cannot scratch my arms."

" I will," said Jeremy.

" And it must be done before morning."

" Is that all ?"

" That is all, and if there is one scrap of seaweed on the rocks when the sun comes over the ocean—I am sorry to say it, but I shall have to drown you."

And with these words she slipped far away into the deep waters below. And Jeremy was left alone, and a cold puff of wind came from the sea and he shivered and put on his cap.

Then he discovered at last what foolish promises he had given the mermaid. Not a thousand men could clear the rocks of seaweed and rub them smooth, not in a month's time. " Alas ! I have boasted sinfully," he groaned. " I am ruined. I am at an end. Alas ! if only I had not thought of the King's daughter."

And he wandered to and fro by the sea, picking a bit of seaweed here and a bit there, and thinking that he heard the mermaids laughing at his cruel fate.

" Is there no one to help me ?" he wept. And then suddenly he cried, " Oh joy !" He had remembered the Giant, and he called out " Caxtacrax !" three times and waited, but there was no answer.

" Clearly and quickly, he told me. But how can I call his name quickly as well as clearly ? I must ! I must !" And he sat down and clenched his fists and went over and over

and over the name, until a distant rumble of thunder seemed to come over the sea.

"Is that the Giant?" he asked.

"It is, Cobbler by trade," said a deep voice. "Tell me your trouble."

And Jeremy told him.

"That will soon be mended," said the Giant. "I have a brother near by you. Lie down and sleep now and you will find all done as you wish before morning."

But Jeremy was afraid to sleep, and before long in the darkness he heard a scraping and a tearing on the rocks, close and far, as though there were an army of crabs at work, and after them the sound of a great rasping file, hour after hour, and once he felt close beside him the swish of a great arm and a grinding on the rocks which made them tremble; and when the first beams of the sun shot up to the heavens, as far as his eye could see, the Seven Islands were edged with a gleaming white band, polished white rock, smooth as glass, and great was his rejoicing.

And with the sun came the albatross from above and the mermaid from below.

"There are your rocks," said Jeremy.

"Yes," said the mermaid, "but you have not cleaned them with your own hands, and as your manners this morning do not please me——"

"Beware," cried the albatross. And seeing a great wave roll in from the sea, Jeremy leapt between her wings, and they rose into the air just as the water swirled over the rocks beneath them, and a shower of spray drenched Jeremy to the skin.

But he was beyond danger.

Back to the King's city swept the albatross with her great wings, and Jeremy reached his shop again, and having looked to see that his diamond was safe, he hastened to the palace with the golden comb.

This time, thought he, I am not too late; and therefore the King cannot deny me his daughter.

The King gave him a royal welcome, and when he saw the comb, he said: "I will send it at once to my daughter—at once."

"Then she is not here?" said Jeremy.

"No," said the King, "I thought that now her wedding-day is fixed she had better take a holiday."



"Your Majesty is quite right," said Jeremy, delighted to hear that the wedding-day was already fixed.

"And you will honour us with your presence at the wedding," said the King. "I will send you an invitation as soon as they are printed. I am sure my daughter will wish it. A wig would have been so oppressive in summer."

"But, your Majesty," said Jeremy, "as I am to marry your daughter——"

"I am afraid, Master Cobbler," said the King, "you have really made a mistake this time. Nothing was said about marriage, when you left us a fortnight ago."

"Are you sure, your Majesty?"

"As sure as you are fidgeting with your feet," said the King. "I said, 'If my second daughter had a golden comb from the Seven Islands,' and then you interrupted me and

said, 'she would be even more beautiful than her sister'; and you went away so suddenly that we had no time to thank you for your kind intentions. I have it all in the royal minute books, signed and countersigned by myself and the Chancellor."

Jeremy did not answer. Twice he had endangered his life and twice he had lost a Princess. Could man suffer greater trial and disappointment?

"But," continued the King, "as you have been so helpful—I have a third daughter——"

"Your Majesty has three daughters?" said Jeremy, astonished.

"May I not have three daughters, if I wish?" said the King. "It is certainly true that my third daughter is not so well known as her sisters, and she is not so beautiful; in fact, she is not at all beautiful, but she is also of royal blood."

"And what can I get to cure her?" said Jeremy wearily.

"That I have no doubt you will find out for yourself," said the King, "for I know no man in my kingdom who has more skill than you in discovering the secret of beauty."

Jeremy was flattered to hear this.

"And would your Majesty," he said, "swear a very royal oath that she is to wed me and no other?"

"Certainly I will swear such an oath," said the King, "and before witnesses."

"Then I will cure her," said Jeremy, and having heard the King's oath, he went home to make himself a pair of stout shoes; for, he thought, it is many miles I shall wander before I find out who knows where the secret of beauty is hidden.

And when he had made the shoes he locked his door and walked out of the city; and not far away on the road he met a young and handsome stranger.

"Young sir," he said, "can you tell me where I shall find that which will make a princess beautiful?"

"No," said the stranger. "I have travelled many seas, but I have never heard speak of any such thing. But perhaps you can tell me——"

Jeremy shook his head. He was afraid the stranger would keep him too long from his journey, and he pattered away down the road.

Perhaps the Giant would help him; but when he called upon his name there was no answer. "He has forgotten me," sighed Jeremy. Alas! he did not know that the friendly Giant had at last eaten one fish-pie too many and was dead.

When evening came he sat down under a tree and ate some berries and cheese and bread, and as he ate he watched the crows fly across the sky, returning contentedly to their nests.

"If only I knew whether the deaf crow was there among them," he said to himself, "he might be of help to me. He knows the secret places of the world and things beneath them unknown to men."

Hardly had he spoken when there was a loud fluttering in the tree, and with joy he saw the head of the deaf crow peeping over a branch above him.

"It is a long journey you are making," said the crow, "to the Snow Mountains of the East and to the four wise men who live on the top of the world. Go forward, sleep in the trees at night that wolves may not devour you, and when two eagles hover above you, lie down on the earth."

"And, O wise crow," said Jeremy, falling on his knees to give thanks, "what must I remember not to do?"

"I will answer you as you answered the stranger in the road," said the crow, and flew away towards the city.

And Jeremy slept in the tree and at sunrise set out again on the road, and for many weeks he journeyed, till he saw standing far into the sky three white pinnacles; and that day two eagles flew over him, as the crow had said, and he lay down on the earth.

And one eagle dropped like a stone out of the sky, and seizing him in his talons lifted him as though he were a rabbit, and soared upwards again. And when he grew tired he called to the other eagle and tossed Jeremy into the air, and as he spun like a ball the other eagle soared up from behind and caught him in her talons. And so they tossed him from one to the other, ever mounting upwards, till they came to the place where cloud and ice met; and there they tossed him into a snowdrift and he sank down and down and down, and found himself at last in a cave, sparkling with pillars of ice, and in the middle of it at a table sat four gnomes, with rosy cheeks and long white beards, laughing and feasting.



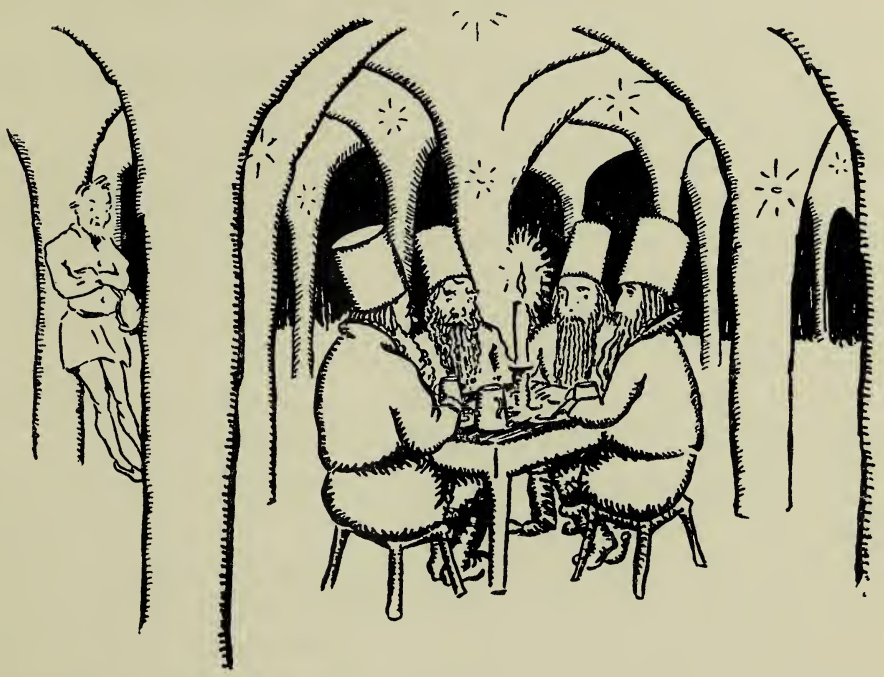
For a moment they all turned to look at him, and then went on laughing and feasting as if they had not seen him.

Jeremy waited a little while, and then he said very timidly, "I greet you all."

"Greetings," chimed the four gnomes, and again they went on with their feasting as if they had not noticed him.

How many hours can such small men eat, he wondered? and he began to grow faint with cold and hunger and the aching of his back bruised by the eagles' claws.

At length the four gnomes pushed back their chairs and stood up, and one came forward.



"We have decided to like you," he said. "Therefore you may return to your home——"

"But——" said Jeremy.

"Unharmed."

"But——" said Jeremy again.

"No buts! No buts!" shouted the other three gnomes in a fierce, shrill voice, and they all stared at him hard.

" But why," said Jeremy to himself, " should I return at all, if I cannot discover the secret for which I came? It were better to die here, if they wish to kill me, than return thus miserably." And looking at the gnomes he said: " I shall not return until you give me what I seek."

" Then," said one of the gnomes, " what you seek will never be yours."

" For," said the second, " what you seek you will find in your own house."

" And," said the third, " in your own hand."

" But," said the fourth, " only when you have returned."

" It seems a long way I have come to learn so little," said Jeremy, when he had repeated their words to himself.

" Who knows what is little and what is much," said the first gnome. " Come, Cobbler, and eat."

" Who knows when he learns and when not," said the second gnome. " Come, Cobbler, and drink."

" And who knows when he is coming and when he is going," said the third gnome. " Come, Cobbler, and sit down."

" And who knows when he has found what he seeks," said the fourth. " Come, Cobbler, and we will wait on you."

I believe they are truly my friends after all, thought Jeremy, as they led him to the table, and when they were untiring in their kindness and hospitality, he ventured to ask them why they had treated him at first so strangely.

" Whenever a man comes to us," said the gnomes, " we always try to behave like men, so that he will understand us."

Jeremy shook his head. " I fear the eagles have tossed my brains upside-down," he said, " for I am too dazed to know what your words mean."

"Come, Cobbler, and sleep," said the gnomes.

"I am afraid to sleep," said Jeremy, "for I may be too late in my returning."

"We will have a care to that," said the gnomes, and they rubbed his back with oils soothing to his bruises, and tucked him up in soft furs, and patted him to sleep.

And in the morning he patched all their shoes in return for his good night's rest, and meanwhile they cleared a path from the cave to the mountain-side, and then he took his leave, and was glad to find that one eagle alone waited to bear him down the icy gulfs to the far distant plain.

And once again after many days he came in safety to the King's city, and he went straight to the palace to remind the King of his oath.

"I have not forgotten it," said the King. "But where is the secret that will cure my daughter?"

"It is in my hand, your Majesty," said Jeremy, remembering the words of the third gnome, and keeping his fingers tightly closed.

"Then may I see it?" said the King.

"I may not even see it myself," said Jeremy boldly.

"I believe your journeys have made you cunning, Master Cobbler," said the King; "but if you cannot make my daughter beautiful, you shall die tomorrow."

"Before the Princess can be cured, she must come to my house," said Jeremy, still with courage. For, thought he, why should I fear a King, when I have not been killed by giants or mermaids or gnomes?

"Who are you to command?" said the King.

"The man who is to wed your daughter," said Jeremy.

" Well," said the King at length, " I never thought to have an old cobbler for my son-in-law; but if you cannot cure her, you will not live more than tomorrow, and when you see her you will know better what I mean. Come tonight to the postern gate of the palace. She will be there."

And when night came Jeremy stood at the postern gate, and when it opened he shuddered with terror. Never had he seen a form so bent and deformed, so evil-eyed and repulsive, so unlike a woman. How could he change this shape into something beautiful? Not even the cream of the Giant's cows nor the golden comb of the mermaid could be of any power against this; and now he had nothing but that which the gnomes had said was in his house, and which he could not even see himself.



Wretched and trembling, he bade the ugly Princess follow him, and they went through the dark shadows of the streets to his little shop; and when they came to the door he opened it, and now, thought he, if the secret is in my hand I must touch her; and with shaking fingers he took her hand and led her into his shop.

And no sooner were they inside than he crept away to find a light, that he might not be followed by this creature in the dark; but his hands shook so much that he could not strike the flint sharply enough to set the tinder on fire.

" If only I had been content to sit and cobble my shoes," he sighed.

And to his great surprise another sigh answered him through the dark room. Surely such a monster could not sigh so gently? Perhaps? Perhaps? Could it be that the gnomes

were right and he had found the secret unknown to himself?

He struck a light, and there before him—a dazzling miracle—a Princess more beautiful than the dawn and much more beautiful than either of her sisters.

"O gnomes, I thank you," he cried, his feet dancing to and fro. "You gave me the power to do this thing. O Jeremy, was ever man more fortunate than yourself? O Princess, to think that you are mine!"

But the young Princess seemed to take the thought sadly. She stood with eyes downcast, close to the door, very beautiful, but pale and still as though her heart were broken.

"I know," said Jeremy, "that sudden changes are always a shock. But I will get you a meal, and you will feel better."

"It is not that," said the Princess.

"What is it, then?" said Jeremy. "Why are you so sad on this wonderful night?"

The Princess sighed, and at last she said: "Do you think you ought to marry me?"

"That is a strange question," said Jeremy.

"I know it is," said the Princess sadly, "but you are a strange man. You are not young. You are not handsome. And if you wish me well, you will not be my husband."

Jeremy could not speak. He stared. It was quite true he was not young, neither was he handsome; but the Princess need not have said it so plainly to his face.

"And I love another," sighed the Princess.

"Who is not a little, bow-legged, grey-haired, leather-faced cobbler," said Jeremy. He paused for breath, and before he could speak again there was a tap on the door.

"Come in," he said sharply, and there entered a tall, handsome young man.

"I think I have seen you before," said Jeremy.

"And you will see me often again," said the stranger, "and not run away from me as you did when I was coming to this city. You are a queer father to run away from your son."

"You—my—son," said Jeremy, flopping down on his bench.

"Your son who ran away to sea ten years ago and was drowned—so they said; but here he is and glad to find you——" and then the young man said no more; for his eyes fell on the Princess and he made her a deep bow.

"I believe I saw you this morning," she said, "from the palace window," and she sighed again.

"So that is it," said Jeremy to himself, and rising suddenly he came forward and said: "My visitor is a Princess, who has consented to wed one of my sons."

"I thought I was your only son," said the young man, burning with jealousy, for never had he seen anyone lovelier than the young Princess.

"Ah!" said Jeremy, "you have been away a long time without writing me a letter. I am a rich man now, richer than the King himself. If you had written to me, I would have written to you and told you these things."

"And you will give all your wealth to this son, that he may marry the Princess?" said the young man. "May he have joy of it. I shall go back to sea tonight; I will not stay to be robbed of my happiness."

"Stay but a moment," said Jeremy, and he suddenly threw himself on his knees before them, and raising a flagstone in the floor, squirmed down into a narrow hole.

"Fear not," said the young man, drawing close to the Princess. "My father was always a queer man, but there is no harm in him."

But all the same the Princess clung to the young man's arm. And then Jeremy climbed out of the floor again, and unfolding strip after strip of leather, he held before them the glittering diamond.

"I said the Princess had consented to marry one of my



sons. This is my wedding gift to him." And coming forward slowly he put the diamond into the hand of his son.

"You are mocking me, father," said the young man.

"I do not think he is," said the Princess.

"We will let the King decide that," said Jeremy. "Let us go to him."

When the King saw the Princess whom he had not dared to look at for twelve years, and when he saw the diamond,

which was worth more than all his own treasure, he was so overcome that he took to his bed for a fortnight, and ordered all the priests to recite their best prayers for his recovery. And when they and the doctors had pronounced him well again, he ordered the speedy marriage of the Princess and the rich young sailor; and never in the history of the kingdom had there been a more splendid wedding nor so many envious eyes gazing at a bride and bridegroom.

And when it was over Jeremy hastened back to his shop, and taking down the shutters, he seized his little pointed knife and a leather hide, and began to make a new shoe, and as he worked at it he began to sing, and as he sang he thought of the friendly Giant and the sly mermaid and the deaf crow and the four wise gnomes on the top of the world and the shoes he would like to make if he had time enough.

And the neighbours said: "Listen to little old Jeremy. We always said he was the happiest man in the kingdom." And this time when the King heard what they said he murmured: "And may he sing from morn till night, so long as he doesn't refuse to make a shoe for each of my royal feet."

GINGER



GINGER

平撒盖食





J. H. & E. R.
MACNAIR





Pun Kee hated ginger



But all his family ate little else.
So he decided to leave them.



Down the village street he went and along the shore till he came to a temple.

A cousin of his was the priest and he asked to be allowed to stay with him.



He made himself useful by carrying
lanthorns in Wedding Processions



And gave the two great poles in front of the temple a new coat of red paint.

He enjoyed that.



In return he was given food and a straw mat in the porch to sleep on, and quite often crackers to let off in front of the door.
And he was happy~
But one day one of the congregation did a good stroke of business and became a rich man ~ To show his gratitude he made an offering to the temple ~ It consisted of six enormous brown pots of ginger!
Pun Kee's cousin was a thrifty man ~ For a long time they lived on little else ~
But Pun Kee hated ginger ~
So he decided to leave him ~





He had an Uncle who lived in a small village hidden completely in a fold of the hills some little way along the coast ~ Pun Kee went to him and asked if he could stay ~

He dug sweet potatoes and pretended to work in the paddy fields among the water buffaloes ~ And when the sun was hot in the afternoons he lay in the sweet smell ~



ing, shady woods that grew all round the village, and ate peanuts. There was never ginger for dinner, and he was happy.

His uncle was a very successful brigand. The police had never caught him because they didn't know where to look for him, in fact they didn't know there was a village there atall, it was so well hidden in the hills.





One day his uncle returned very pleased from a most successful expedition. Behind him came a string of coolies carrying the spoil. From their poles hung great brown pots.



The pots were full of ginger
His uncle was a thrifty man. For a long time they lived on little else. So Pun Kee decided to leave him. You see he simply couldn't bear ginger.



As it happened there was a junk at anchor in the little, sandy cove below the village. This junk belonged to his great uncle the pirate.

Pun Kee went aboard and asked to be allowed to stay.

He watered the flowerpots and fanned the char-





-coal stove when his great aunt couldn't get it to burn in the morning, he fed the chickens in the basket and polished the brass top of the capstan, and made himself useful in many ways.

So he was allowed to go to sea with them. For some days they had no luck. Then they



came upon a heavily loaded junk, and after a stern fight captured it ~ The hatches were torn off to see what the cargo was ~ ~ ~

It was ginger!
When Pun Kee heard he fell overboard~
Luckily they were not far from land, and he managed to swim ashore~ He climbed out onto a sandy beach at the foot of a narrow valley~ Among the trees above the beach was a large building~ Pun Kee walked towards it, and when he was still some way off he smelt a smell~





From the smell he knew at once what the building was ~

It was a ginger factory!

Then he fainted ~ When he recovered he found that someone had picked him up and carried him in to the factory ~ He very nearly ran away at once but he was hungry ~ So he stayed hoping to get some food ~



And soon he found out that (for reasons we need not go into here) nobody in a ginger factory ever eats ginger~



So he stayed and worked in the ginger factory~ But he never packed the ginger into plain brown jars~ He always used nice dumpy blue ones with round tops and white flowers painted on them~

He said it looked less like ginger that way~

And he ate rice and sweet potatoes and shark's fins and chicken skin and roast pork and dried fish and black eggs

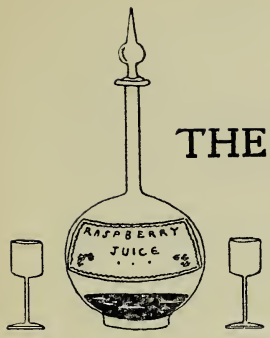


and sugar cane and chow-chow and cumquats and all sorts of good things ~

BUT NEVER GINGER ~

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~~~~~~~





THE BAD BARONS OF CRASHBANIA

By NORMAN HUNTER

CHAPTER I

EVERYBODY in Crashbania loved kind King Timbletuft. Everybody cheered him as he passed in his carriage. Everybody except Baron Hardpate and Baron Bushwisker, who didn't love anybody except themselves.

The Barons were as wicked as King Timbletuft was kind. They were the worst Barons ever known. Even a wicked fairy who had been living near by packed up her things and went away in disgust because of them.

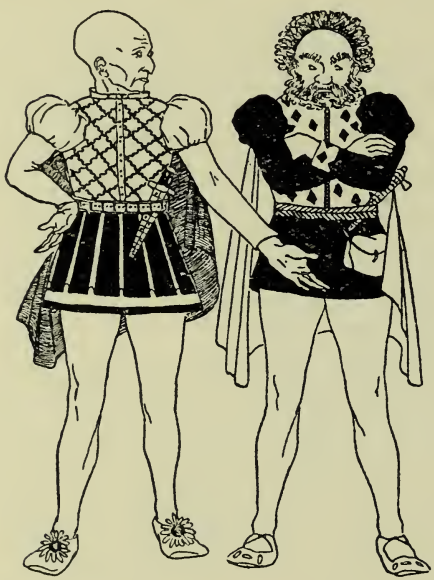
And didn't they hate King Timbletuft! They hated him because he was kind, and they hated him because he was King.

"Why should he be King and do all the ruling?" they would say to each other. "We could do it twice as well; there are two of us." Then they would go away to a tavern and drink lots of raspberry-juice, not because they liked it, but because it was considered a very wicked thing to do in Crashbania.

"Look here, Hardpate," said Baron Bushwisker one day. "I'm tired of being a mere Baron." He had great black bushy whiskers and very beetling brows, and he beetled them like anything as he spoke. "I'm ambitious, that's what I am. I want to get on. Let's get rid of King Timbletuft and rule Crashbania ourselves."

"Ha!" growled Baron Hardpate, who had a bald head and no whiskers at all, not even one, so that he had to wash his face all over. "Why not let's? We have been crushed under in Crashbania long enough."

"Come," he growled, "let us plot," and throwing some money to the landlord of the tavern—about half what they ought to have paid, and most of that bad money that they'd made themselves—he strode craftily out of the tavern followed by Baron Hardpate, whose bald head glinted wickedly in the candle-light.



* * * *

The next night, two hours after bedtime, the Bad Barons met in a disused tool-shed in the middle of a disused field two miles outside the town. It was a moonless night, and owls hooted in the trees.

Baron Hardpate came first, wrapped in an eiderdown, his head covered with a sack in which he had cut two holes for his eyes. He flung the door of the shed open, rushed in, and jumped out of the window. Then he came stealthily round to the door again and peeped in.

"Ha!" he growled inside the sack. "All is clear!" And having thus made sure that nobody else was about, he took out a candle-end, lit it, and stood it in a flower-pot so that the light shouldn't show too much.

Presently across the field came Baron Bushwisker, just as heavily disguised in a piece of old carpet and wearing a basket over his head to hide his whiskers. He crept across the field, making noises like somebody not creeping across a field at all, which he had learned from an old book of witchcraft. He crept up to the door and poked his head in.

" Hist !" he said, and Baron Hardpate was so scared that he jumped two yards in the air and hit his bald sack-covered head on the roof of the shed.

" Ena mena mina mo," said Baron Bushwisker through the basket, using the secret signal by which they were to know each other.

" Zambuck Timbuc too," growled Baron Hardpate, rubbing his head. " Thou art late whatever."

" Aye !" answered Baron Bushwisker, copying the other's mysterious talk. " I took precautions gadzooks at all at all."

" Thou didst well," growled Hardpate. " I took these," and he produced a bag of custard tarts from under his eiderdown. Then the two wicked, frightful, secret, horrible, disguised Barons sat down together in the disused tool-shed in the disused field two miles from the town, plotting and plotting and eating custard tarts by the light of a candle-end inside a flower-pot. And all the while the owls went on hooting outside just as if they liked doing it, which they probably did.

At last, when the dawn was getting ready to break, the Barons finished their plotting, finished their custard tarts, and drawing their disguises closely around them, departed as silently as they had come, taking the candle-end with them, while the owls, who had either gone to sleep or used up all their hoots, did nothing to stop them.



. . . Plotting and plotting, and eating custard tarts.

CHAPTER II

The Royal Court was in full swing at the palace when the Royal Usher of the Blue Collar called out:

"The right honourable Lord Hardpate, second Baron of Crashbania, also the just as honourable Lord Bushwisker, third Baron of Crashbania."

"I advise your Majesty not to see them," whispered the Lord Chancellor hurriedly.

"Tut, tut, my dear Chancellor!" said the King with a smile. "Everyone is down on the poor Barons, and I'm sure they can't be as bad as you think. Show them in!" he cried, and the Bad Barons strode across the carpet and kissed the hand of the King with murder in their hearts.

"Your Majesty," said Baron Bushwisker, his beard wagging up and down and sending cold shivers all over the ladies-in-waiting near the throne, "we crave a private audience. We have news of great importance to your Royal person and the throne of Crashbania."

"Don't do it!" whispered the Lord Chancellor; but the King waved him aside.

"It is most urgent," said Baron Hardpate.

"In that case," said the King, standing up, "I most certainly grant you a private audience," and he led the way through a door at the other end of the throne room, closely followed by the Barons.

While the King was gone the Royal Crashbanian Band struck up a tune to pass the time.

They played the Crashbanian National Anthem, which sounds something like "Annie Laurie" and something like

"Ride a Cock-horse," while everyone stood up, and one or two rather new nobles who didn't know much about the ways of Court went home, thinking it was all over.

Then the band played the National Anthem all over again with variations. But the King and the Barons did not return.

Suddenly from behind the door came a loud cry, followed by a thud.

The Lord Chancellor sprang to his feet.

"Guards! Guards!" he cried in a ringing voice. Then he dashed across the room and flung himself against the door.

"Locked!" he cried, and five duchesses, three marchionesses and ten grand-dames fainted, while everyone else started rushing about calling for guards and police and for anything they could think.

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty!" the Lord Chancellor was crying, rattling the handle of the door, but no sound came from the room beyond.

"Break down the door!" roared the Chancellor, drawing his Court sword and waving it in the air, smashing several gas globes as he did so.

Bang, bang, bang! Thud, crash! went the halberds of the guards. The door flew in splinters before their onslaught. Into the room dashed the brave Lord Chancellor. Then with a gasp he fell back.

The window was wide open and of the Barons there was no sign, but there on the floor lay poor King Timbletuft. And he was dead.

CHAPTER III

The entire country went into mourning for their beloved King. Everyone wore black, and everyone was sad and sobbing. And the ladies of the Court made themselves so red-eyed and ugly with crying that all the mirrors were covered with black paint so that they shouldn't see themselves.

No parties were allowed, and the only food eaten was burnt toast, black-currant jam and liquorice, which is black, and only black coffee was drunk. The Queen shut herself up and wouldn't see anyone, and even the weather, which had been quite sunny, grew clouded and stormy.

But wicked Baron Hardpate and wicked Baron Bushwisker were very pleased with themselves.

" How splendidly the plot worked !" said Hardpate, rubbing his nasty bald head. " It was worth a night in a disused tool-shed in a disused field two miles from the town."

" Aye," agreed Baron Bushwisker, beetling his brows more than ever.

" Now we had better go separate ways, get ourselves disguised so that we shall not be captured, and meet later."

So the villains shook hands, rubbed noses and crossed fingers, then each took a different road and hurried from the town.

It wasn't long before Baron Bushwisker came to a small village called Little Plumpole, and, seeking out the shop of the village Barber, he strode inside.

" I am going to a fancy dress ball," he said, " and I do not wish to be recognised. Disguise me to the best of your ability,

and make a good job of it, or, by thunder, you shall suffer!" He brushed the Barber aside, then, going to the barber's chair, he seized a young man who was having his hair cut, threw him out of the shop, and sat down in the chair himself.

"Hurry!" he growled.

"Er—yessir," said the little Barber, feeling very frightened. "One moment, sir, while I make preparations." He hurried to his little back room.

"H'm!" said the Barber, when he was safely out of the Baron's sight. "Now why does he want to be disguised? He isn't going to any fancy dress parties, because since the King's death no parties are allowed." He scratched his head. "Ah, I wonder!" he said, and rummaging about among his combs and scissors and hair curlers, he pulled out a copy of the *Crashbanian Daily Post*, the newspaper in which news of the King's death had been announced. There on the front page was a great photograph of Baron Bushwisker and another of Baron Hardpate, and underneath were the words:

Ten thousand gold rindles reward (equal to half that number of English pounds).

Be it known to all loyal Crashbanians that WHEREAS His most Gracious and never sufficiently to be lamented Majesty Timbletuft, King of Crashbania, has been wickedly, cruelly and murderously done to death by Baron Bushwisker and Baron Hardpate,

IT IS DECLARED

that whosoever shall help to capture the said Barons, dead or alive, or do anything that shall cause them to be captured, shall receive the above reward. No entrance fee.

WHEREBY ALL LOYAL CRASHBANIANS ARE HEREBY ENJOINED (meaning asked very nicely) to do all they can and more to bring the criminals to justice.

Signed and sealed on behalf of CRASHBANIA :

THOROPUFF, *Lord Chancellor.*

SHOOBANGFIRE, *General Commanding Crashbanian Forces.*

HANK-KUFF, *Chief of Police.*

Witness their hands:

DIDDLEDUB HOBCRUM, *Cleaner of the Royal Boots.*

" My goodness and bless my scissors!" cried the Barber. " 'Tis undoubtedly the terrible Baron Bushwisker." He was more frightened than ever now.

Then suddenly a great idea struck him. And it was such a wonderful idea that it struck him all of a heap, and he had to sit down for a moment to collect himself. Then, pulling himself together, he went back to the Baron.



He cut all the Baron's bushy hair off. He cut all the Baron's bushy whiskers off. And he shaved his face and shaved his head so clean that the lights in the shop glinted on it just as the lights of the tavern and the throne room had glinted on Baron Hardpate's bald head. Then he trimmed the Baron's eyebrows and washed his face all over, putting some of the soap in his eyes and mouth on purpose, just for revenge.

And when the Barber had finished Baron Bushwisker didn't look the least bit like himself. Nobody would ever have recognised him. But he looked exactly like Baron Hardpate.

"Good!" grunted the Baron when the disguise was finished. He couldn't see himself in the mirror, because all the mirrors in Crashbania had been painted black since the King's death, but he felt that with all his whiskers off he could never be recognised as Baron Bushwisker.

"You have done well," he grunted, and dropping two bad gold pieces into the Barber's hand, he strode out, feeling rather chilly and airy round the face and head.

Baron Bushwisker hadn't been gone long before Baron Hardpate, following another road, arrived at the same village of Little Plumpole and came to the same Barber's shop, as it was the only barber's shop in the village.

In he stalked and planked himself down in the chair.

"I am taking part in some amateur theatricals," he said, "and I wish to be disguised so that nobody will recognise me."

"Yessir; certainly, sir," said the Barber, and went into his back room and had another look at the photographs in the newspaper.

"Amateur theatricals my nightcap!" he said to himself, knowing that amusements like that weren't allowed now the King was dead. "That's Baron Hardpate, I'll be bound."

So he made a false wig out of the hair he had cut from Baron Bushwisker's head. He made a false beard out of Baron Bushwisker's whiskers, and he put the wig on Baron Hardpate's bald head and the beard on Baron Hardpate's chin. Then he stuck some more bushy bits on his eyebrows to make

them look beetling. When he had finished Baron Hardpate didn't look in the least like himself. Nobody would have recognised him. But he looked exactly like Baron Bushwisker, although he didn't know it because the mirror was painted over black.

"That is very good, I'm sure," said the Baron, feeling quite mild and pleased now that he was disguised. "Give me change for this banknote." He handed the Barber a genuine Crashbanian banknote for five gold rindles, which he had stolen from the King's pocket.

"Ta," said the Barber, and for change gave him the two bad gold pieces that Baron Bushwisker had left.

Off went Baron Hardpate, looking like Baron Bushwisker; while Baron Bushwisker, looking like Baron Hardpate, trudged on his way as well. And they both felt very safe and happy, but the Barber laughed three loud laughs, because he knew he would soon get the ten thousand gold rindles reward and be able to enjoy himself.

"Ha, ha!" he cried. "It's all right to be a barber, if you're clever and smart."

CHAPTER IV

All this time things were in an awful muddle at the Court of Crashbania. The ministers met in council to decide what to do about the throne, but nobody could think of anything.

Then the Court Magician came in.

"Ah," said the Lord Chancellor, "here is the man to solve the problem, surely, if anyone can." He stood up.

"Professor Wagglewand, the King must be brought to life again. Can't you do it?"

But, alas! Professor Wagglewand wasn't a real magician, but only a conjurer. He could take rabbits out of hats and make Crashbanian pennies disappear, but when it came to bringing people to life again when they were thoroughly dead he was of no more use than the others.

"It is beyond my powers," he said gravely, taking a string of sausages from the Lord Chancellor's pocket, "deeply though I have studied the mystic arts. Long though I have delved into legerdemain, miracles of such magnitude are as yet not possible to me," by which he meant that he couldn't do it, only, of course, he wasn't going to say so as simply as all that. He was Court Magician even though he couldn't magic much.

"Can't you look it up?" asked the Lord Chamberlain, who was always looking up trains and recipes and things.

Professor Wagglewand shook his head three times, and turning his hat into a chair, he sat down.

"It is beyond my power, as I have said," he repeated; "but since the sorrowful end of our loved monarch I have been looking through the archives——"

"The arc-who's?" asked the Lord Chief Justice, who always asked what things meant even when he knew.

"The archives—old documents and things," explained the Magician. "I have also been looking at the Museum."

"It's been shut for years," said the Lord Chamberlain. "Nobody went, and it cost too much to keep the things dusted."

" I got in through the window," said Professor Wagglewand, " and among the things I found something which may help us."

" What is it ?" they all cried eagerly, leaning over the table and spilling the ink.

" The Golden Apple of Life," said the Magician as calmly as if he were saying " Twopennyworth of peardrops." He caused the ink to return to the ink bottles with a wave of his hand and went on:

" It was presented to the Kingdom of Crashbania many years ago by an Eastern potentate. It has the power to bring to life any person killed in battle, but it has never been used, because good King Timbletuft ruled so wisely that there was never any fighting in his time."

" But—I—we—let's," shouted all the others, getting frightfully excited and hopping about like dried peas in a can.

The Magician raised his hand. " Silence," he said, " and I will explain. I certainly think we should try to bring the King to life with this marvellous fruit, but I have grave doubts. The apple brings to life those killed in battle, and the King, as we know, was murdered."

" Perhaps he put up a fight," said the Lord Chancellor.

" Perhaps he did," agreed Professor Wagglewand. " On the other hand, perhaps he had no chance. Then, again, it is so many years since the apple was given to Crashbania that its magic power may have waned, or "—he paused impressively —" or it may be that the apple never possessed any magic power," he finished. " I never heard of anyone being brought to life with an apple yet."

By this time the Council were in such a state of excitement to get the apple and try it that they were dancing up and down and grabbing at each other and all saying things at once until the Council Chamber was like a cage full of monkeys.

"Come!" cried the Magician. "Let us to the Museum!" And out he went, while all the others made a rush after him and got wedged in the doorway. Fortunately he turned and saw them or they might have stayed jammed there all day.

At last the Museum was reached. Of course it was shut and the door was locked and nobody knew where the key was, so they had to crawl in through the window; but by this time their excitement had worn off a bit and they were feeling a wee bit nervous about going inside the gloomy Museum among all the weird things that were there. So they went in one by one, and didn't get stuck this time.

"There it is! There it is!" cried the Lord Chancellor, pointing excitedly to a glass case at one end of the Museum.

The others followed his direction, and saw in the half-light a wonderful golden apple in a glass case, and from the apple there came a strange rosy glow, just as if it were a beautiful lamp.

The Magician went to the case, opened it, and took out the Magic Apple, holding it carefully in a silk handkerchief while the others crowded round to look.

"It has only to be applied to the lips of the dead person at midnight," he explained, "and life will return, provided that person was killed in battle and provided the apple is really as magic as it's supposed to be." He wrapped it carefully in his silk handkerchief, and they all climbed out through the window again and went back to the palace.

* * * * * *

At five minutes to midnight the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Chief Justice and the Magician stood in the Throne Room where the King was lying in state. The Queen had been invited, but she was too frightened to come.

"Gentlemen," the Magician was saying, "I beg that you will all keep the utmost silence while I apply the apple to His Majesty's lips. The slightest sound may break the spell."

The gold clock over the throne struck twelve.

All the ministers held their breath.

The Magician took the Magic Golden Apple of Life from his silk handkerchief and very gently pressed the glowing fruit to the King's lips.

Nothing happened.

The Magician frowned.

Still nothing happened.

Then suddenly, just as the Lord Chancellor was going to say something, the King moved. Yes, he actually moved. Just a twitch of his eyelid.

Then he lifted his hand. Then he lifted his head, sighed, and opened his eyes.

"Your Majesty!" gasped the Lord Chancellor, falling on his knee with the tears streaming down his face. "Your Majesty!" And all the other ministers swallowed big lumps in their throats and got out their hankies, for they were very fond of the King. Even the Court Magician had to stifle a sob.

The King sat up.

"Where am I?" he asked. Then he looked round, grasped the Lord Chancellor's hands and shook them, while the other ministers all beamed with delight.

" Why, what has happened?" asked the King. " I seem to remember." He passed his hand over his head. " Why, yes "—his face grew serious—" why Baron Hardpate and Baron Bushwisker. They attacked me! Terrible! That they should be such villains, after all!"

" Your Majesty was murdered," explained the Magician, " but the Golden Apple of Life has happily brought you back to us again."

" Hurray!" cried the King, suddenly brightening up, and he kissed all the ministers twice on the nose. Then, rushing upstairs, he burst into the Queen's boudoir, giving her maids the fright of their lives.

" Clara!" he cried, using her Christian name for the first time since their coronation.

" Albert!" she cried. " Oh, Albert, we've had an awful time!" And she kissed him forty-five times, and he kissed her forty-five times, which make ninety times altogether, if you're good at arithmetic.

CHAPTER V

On the outskirts of Crashbania, almost on the frontier, Baron Hardpate, looking like Baron Bushwisker, came striding down the road.

" Heavens!" he cried, and stopped short, for he saw himself coming towards him.

It was Baron Bushwisker coming up the road disguised as Baron Hardpate, and he too cried out at seeing what he thought was himself.

"We have been tricked!" they hissed when they had discovered that they were each other. "We must get over the frontier into the next country quick, before we are caught."

But they were too late. Even as they turned soldiers appeared from behind the hedges and surrounded them on all sides.

From behind a tree out walked General Shoobangfire himself.

He tapped Baron Hardpate on the shoulder.

"I arrest you, Baron Bushwisker," he said, "for the murder of the King." Then he tapped Baron Bushwisker on the shoulder.

"And you, Baron Hardpate, for the same thing."

So, in spite of their disguises, and in spite of their plotting in a disused tool-shed in the middle of a disused field two miles outside the town, the Bad Barons of Crashbania were arrested and thrown into the dungeons.

* * * * * *

The next day the Barons were brought before the Lord Chief Justice to be tried.

"Baron Hardpate," called the usher.

"Here," said Baron Bushwisker, who found it was useless to protest that he wasn't Baron Hardpate, now that his whiskers were shaved off.

"Baron Bushwisker!" cried the Usher.

"Here," groaned Baron Hardpate, who had given up saying he was himself.

"What is the charge?" asked the Lord Chief Justice, dipping his finger in the ink by mistake and scratching his nose with a pen.

"The Barons are charged with murdering the King of Crashbania," answered General Shoobangfire.

"Have you anything to say for yourselves?" said the justice.

"Yes, we jolly well have," shouted the Barons, and they pointed rudely at the King, who was sitting beside the judge. "There's the King alive and well, so we can't be charged with murdering him."

The Lord Chief Justice scratched his nose again.

"Quite true," he said. "You can't be accused of murdering the King when he's now alive. Any other charge?"

"Yes," said the General. "In that case we charge the Barons with attempted murder of the King."

"Nonsense!" jeered the Barons. "It wasn't attempted murder; we succeeded."

At this the court began to get very excited, and a lot of whispering went on. It really looked as if, after all, in spite of the Barber's cleverness in disguising the Barons to look like each other and getting them caught, they were going to get off free.

"Can't we charge them with plotting against the Royal person?" asked the Lord Chancellor.

"Nobody heard them plotting," said the judge.

"Well, what about assaulting the King?" said the Lord Chamberlain.

"We can only give them a little punishment for that," said the judge, "and they ought to be executed, because they did murder the King, even though he is alive now."

"Look here, my Lord," protested the General. "It must be evident to the court that the Barons have done something

very nasty, even though we cannot say exactly what crime they have committed. I think something nasty ought to be done to them, so there!" And he sat down amid a burst of applause.

But the Lord Chief Justice shook his head.

"We must be just," he said gravely. "The honour of Crashbania must be served. We cannot do anything nasty to them except by way of punishment for their crime." He paused and scratched his head again. "This is my judgment," he said at last. "The Barons evidently did murder the King, because they were the only persons with him at the time of his death, and the dagger with which he was killed is known to belong to Baron Hardpate." Here the Lord Chief Justice glared over his spectacles at Baron Bushwisker. "Besides," he went on, "the Barons admit murdering the King, so for that their punishment is death." He put on the black cap and pronounced the death sentence.

"Now," he said, taking the black cap off again and wiping his forehead with it in mistake for a handkerchief, "the next thing is that the King was happily brought to life again, so that, to be just, having executed the Barons for the murder, we must then bring them to life again with the Golden Apple, because their victim is now alive."

So the Barons were taken away to await execution, while the hubbub in the court was terrific, what with everyone talking and arguing and protesting. But the Lord Chief Justice was satisfied. He remembered that the Golden Apple would only bring to life those killed in battle, and he hoped it wouldn't work with executed criminals. Little did he guess what was going to happen.

CHAPTER VI

The day of the Barons' execution dawned bright and shining. Inside the condemned cell the Barons were miserable, frightened, hopeful, puzzled, and fed up in turn.

" There's nothing to worry about, Hardpate," said Baron Bushwisker. " The apple will bring us to life as it did the King."

" I don't believe a word about the apple," growled Baron Hardpate. " There's some trickery somewhere. And, anyway, it's going to be nasty being executed, even if we are brought to life again."

Just then in came the warders and soldiers, and the Barons were marched out into the market square, where all public events were held in Crashbania. And such a crowd was there! It was like Lord Mayor's Show day and Cup Final and Derby day all rolled into one. People packed the streets. People crowded on the house-tops. People were wedged in the windows and clustered round lamp-posts and standing on carts.

The Barons were blindfolded and placed against a wall while a squad of soldiers lined up in front.

" Careful now!" warned General Shoobangfire, adding under his breath, " I bet they miss them; the last time they had any shooting practice none of them could hit a haystack if he was more than a yard away from it."

" Take aim!" cried the General.

The Barons danced with terror. The populace danced with excitement. All the officials of the Court danced with



The Barons were marched out into the market square.

sheer nervousness, and the King danced because somebody had danced on to his toe.

"Fire!" cried the General. Bang, bangetty bang! went the guns. Most of the bullets went wide, but there were so many soldiers that there wasn't room for them all to miss, and the two Barons fell dead.

"Silence!" cried the usher, "while the Golden Apple is applied."

The Court Magician strode majestically forward. Everyone held their breaths as he took up the magic fruit.

Then, as the apple touched the Barons, something happened that will never be forgotten in Crashbania. The sky suddenly grew dark, and down swooped a huge black Djin or Eastern Geni into the market square, his eyes sending out sparks of fire.

"Stay!" The Djin's voice boomed out like a roll of thunder. "You are not fit to be guardians of the Golden Apple of Life. You have violated its great power by using it upon executed criminals. The Golden Apple goes back to its rightful home!" cried the Djin, picking up the fruit with one enormous hand and the two Barons with the other, "and these wretched Barons—they are mine. Ha, ha!" And with a terrible laugh the Djin sprang into the air and vanished, while thunderstorms broke out all over the country.

* * * * * *

"My word, that was exciting while it lasted!" said the Lord Chancellor, drawing his hand across his forehead.

"Most upsetting," said King Timbletuft, shaking his head. "The least we can do now is to give a banquet to the populace

as soon as the weather clears up, to make up for the fright they've had."

So, as soon as the thunderstorms had stopped and arrangements could be made, the entire population of Crashbania attended a terrific banquet. And so great was the banquet that no hall in the kingdom was anywhere near large enough, so they laid the tables on the great rolling plains outside the city. It was great fun really, because wild deer and things kept coming up and taking food off people's plates.

When the banquet was over and everybody was so full of good things that they couldn't move, and didn't want to if they could, the King stood up.

"Good Crashbanians," he cried, "there is one of you present here today to whom we owe a big thank you. Mr. Theophilus Shinglesnip, the barber of Little Plumpole. Kneel down, Mr. Shinglesnip," said the King; then, drawing his sword, he tapped the Barber lightly on the shoulder, saying, "Arise, Theophilus Shinglesnip, now Lord Plumpole, first Baron of Crashbania and Steward of the Royal Hairdressers."

When the cheers had died away, which took a long time, for the Little Plumpolians kept on starting again and again, the King cried: "It is also our pleasure to announce that Little Plumpole is little no longer, but Great Plumpole, for we hereby grant our Royal Charter to that village, which means that in future the trains will stop there, and the shops may keep open on Wednesday afternoons if they like."

Then there was more cheering. The Barber received his reward of ten thousand gold rindles, while the Court Magician, Professor Wagglewand, received a new wand to waggle and



Wild deer and things kept coming up and taking food.

a set of purple and silver robes edged with green for the service he had rendered Crashbania by remembering about the Magic Apple.

The Bad Barons of Crashbania were never seen or heard of again.



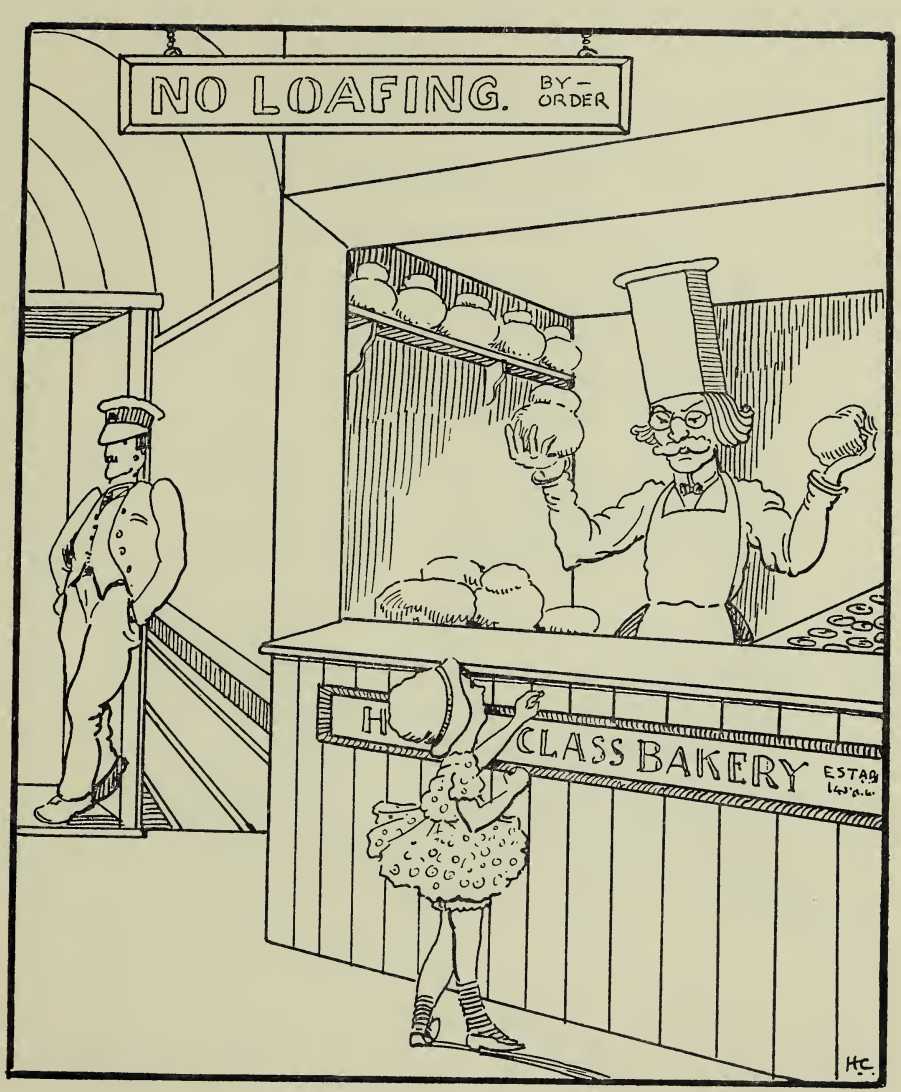
RHYMES OF THE STATIONS

By HUGH CHESTERMAN

BAKER STREET

OR, THE LAY OF THE LOAFER

WHEN I was little I longed to eat
The bread that they baked at Baker Street,
So I went to buy a loaf for tea,
But never a Baker did I see.
I searched all day—but never a sight
Of a sugar-loaf cap and an apron white,
Of glowing ovens and floury bins,
Of kneading troughs and of baking tins.
So I said to the man at the entrance gate:
" If it isn't too late,
I want some bread,
A loaf for tea
And another for dinner."
He only said:
" *Platform Three,*
And you change at Pinner."
But I'm always hoping—hoping to meet
The Baker who bakes at Baker Street.


NO LOAFING. BY-ORDER
CLASS BAKERY
HC.

PADDINGTON

OR, THE PADDED PUFFER

AT Paddington do Porters go
For ever padding to and fro,
And never rest like Porters do
At Cannon Street or Waterloo?

And does a guard with muted clippers,
In padded coat and carpet slippers,
Say, "Tickets, please," to stuffy trippers?

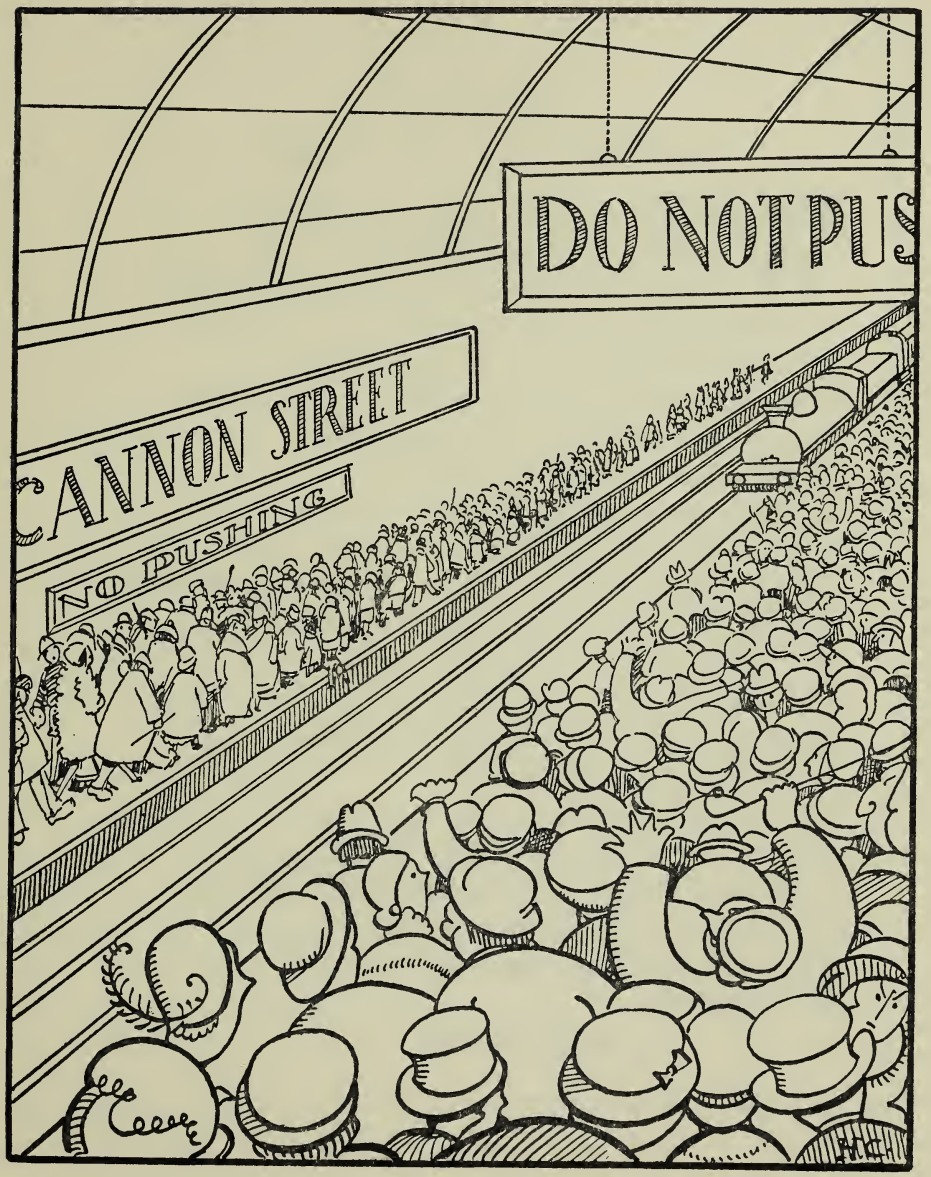
I've heard that trains with padded funnels
Steam silently through quilted tunnels;
And one of Paddington's great joys is
They muffle all the engine noises
Lest sound should penetrate the padding
In rooms where railwaymen are adding
(With sighs of "Oh, how few it is!")
The tale of their gratuities.


NO TALKING
HC.

CANNON STREET

OR, HITHER COME, HITHER GO

I SOMETIMES catch the 5.16
From Cannon Street to Hither Green,
But all the folk who hither go
To Hither Green distress me so.
It's hither, thither, scud and scurry,
And all is haste and all is hurry.
The impact of our wild collidings
Resounds and rings
In tunnels dark and distant sidings;
Our cannonings,
Our mirthless bumpings and reboundings,
Re-echo far from our surroundings.
Oh, it was right
And it was meet
To call this station Cannon Street!


DO NOT PUS
CANNON STREET
NO PUSHING

WATERLOO

OR, THE NAP OF THE GUARDS

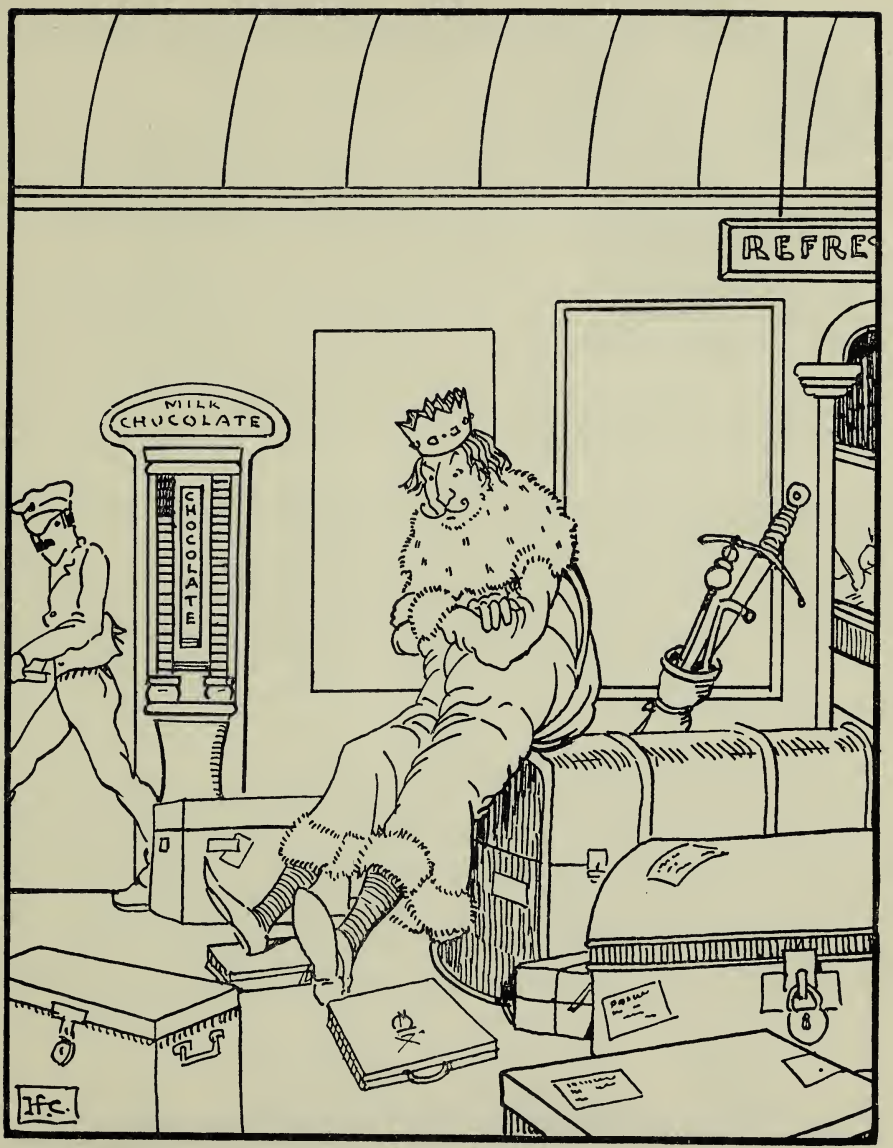
WHILE waiting once at Waterloo
I fell asleep (on Platform Two),
And in my dreams the station changed
To fields where, rank on rank, were ranged
Ten thousand porters and the drums
Beat loud, and someone said, " Here comes
The Duke, and, spurring even faster,
Napoleon, the Station Master."
He blew his whistle, waved his flag;
The Duke declaimed his well-worn tag:
" Up, guards, and at 'em !" Two stout-hearted
Newsboys cried, " The battle's started !"
An engine promptly let off steam,
An incident that caused extreme
Annoyance to the Duke, who cried,
' It isn't fair on either side.'
Then Blucher came upon the scene
And bravely forced his way between
The combatants, with shrill-voiced threats
Of ' Papers, choc'lates, cigarettes !'
Then plunged into the battle-smoke
Of Waterloo—
and I awoke.


THE IRO
DUKE
BONY
HC.

KING'S CROSS

or, Missing the Points

KING'S CROSS, King's Cross,
That's what they call it, but I'm at a loss
To know which King the station names—
William or Charles or George or James.
And how was he cross, and why and when?
Did the train that was timed to start at ten
Depart at exactly 12.15?
Or was it the fault of the slot machine
Where his penny got stuck, or did the guard
Leave his bag in the station yard?
The problem makes me turn and toss:
I cannot make out *why* the King was cross.


REFRES
MILK
CHOCOLATE
CHOCOLATE
Ifc.

Mother Bunch



by Madeleine Nightingale

"AND to think that you really lived in this same house when *you* were a little girl!"

"The very same," said Aunt Lavinia. She was *great*-aunt actually, old and very small, and she sat very upright in her low chair, staring with rather dim eyes into the fire.

"And did you have the same nursery?"

Aunt Lavinia's little white head nodded up and down.

"The very same," she answered. "With the very same iron bars across the windows and the very same field away beyond the garden-wall. The same buttercups were there too, creeping up taller and taller as the summer days went by, swaying very gently in the breeze, bowing and nodding



to the sorrel, and the same moonpennies shining like little quivering ghosts in the dusk. Some years," she went on reminiscently " (when the Long Acre was kept for pasturage), in the springtime there would be lambs instead of the buttercups—the very same black-legged woolly lambs."

" Not quite the same," put in Anne.

" The very same woolly lambs," repeated Aunt Lavinia not heeding her. " And under the red hawthorn-tree—only *then* it was quite a small tree, more like a bush than a real tree, with scarcely any trunk worth calling a trunk, you know; nothing but a thin stem covered with little green shootings; but under it the May fairy lived, just as she does now. And then, beside her, of course, there was Mother Bunch."

" Oh, Auntie darling!" said Little Anne, putting down Ruffles and creeping closer, " I don't know about Mother Bunch. Could you—do you think—could you possibly tell me, or would it tire you? *Does* it tire you to make stories?"

Aunt Lavinia's tiny, hot, dry hand slid from her lap and fell to stroking Anne's shoulder.

" Not *that* kind of story," she answered, " because I don't need to make it; it makes itself. Though I'm afraid, my dear, it wouldn't be really a story at all. Only just little bits of happenings, you know. Not a really *interesting* story, I mean."

" I love that kind of story the best," said Anne; " much the best always."

" I wasn't a very *good* little girl when I was your age, I'm afraid," went on Aunt Lavinia. " In fact, not at all a good little girl. I was rather a bundle, you see. That was what my Nannie called me. (Only we didn't say Nannie in those days, you know.) A regular bundle. ' Well, really, Miss

Lavinia,' she would say, 'there's no doubt at all about it—you *are* a bundle.' And sometimes my mother would say it too. 'Yes, Susan, I really think she is,' she'd agree; 'a regular bundle.' "

"Oh, Auntie, I love you being a bundle," cried Anne. "But what did she mean, do you think? What would you be a bundle *of*, do you suppose?"

"Well, my dear, sometimes I'm afraid she meant a bundle of mischief; sometimes a bundle of real naughtiness; but generally—or so I've grown to think—generally she meant a bundle of oddness, all mixed-up and unexpected, you know. A sort of I-don't-quite-know-what's-inside-and-oh-isn't-it-tightly-tied-up kind of bundle."

Anne gave a little wriggle.

"That's the very nicest kind of bundle there could possibly be."

"I suppose I *was* rather odd and wrapped-up," continued Aunt Lavinia musingly; "I think it was mostly because I never seemed able to be the same outside as inside, and so naturally people got a mistaken idea. For instance, I was really a quite affectionate little creature. Indeed, so passionately did I love my mother that often at night I couldn't get to sleep for the misery of a thought that used to come to me—the thought, 'Supposing I hadn't got her. Supposing she died. Supposing the whole world suddenly went empty like that.' Then I used to roll over on my face, bury it in the pillow, and bite the linen of it to stop myself crying out. Yes," said Aunt Lavinia, "I can smell the lavender of it now, and I think that's why always when the lavender bushes beneath the windows waft up their scent in the hot sun, a sort of little achy pain comes up with it, so that I have to stop whatever I

am doing and scold myself for feeling sad. I believe it brings back, without any thought of mine, how wet my pillow used to be. You see what a very foolish little girl I was, Anne. You don't do things like that, do you? It was just my being such a bundle that made *me* do it, I expect. But the foolish part was that I never let her *see* that I loved her. 'She's such an undemonstrative child,' she used sometimes to say. Of course I know (and you know, too, Anne) that undemonstrative only means not showing one's feelings; but it seemed a terrible kind of condemnation then, because I didn't understand at all what it meant, and guessed it to be something quite extraordinarily bad. But once she said to my father, 'No, I'm afraid she hasn't much affection of any kind'; and I knew what affection meant. I was sitting by my window playing with my doll. I believe, really, at that very moment I was wishing she would hug me as I sometimes hugged Dolly —though, since I never hugged even Dolly except when we were quite alone, Mamma could not possibly know I wanted or even thought of such a thing. Well, anyway, I did hear, and I turned my head right away to look out of the window so that she shouldn't see my lip trembling. For inside I was all bubbling with love like a soda-water bottle, Anne. Do *you* ever bubble like that?"

Anne squeezed her hand.

"Oh yes," she whispered. "Go on, though, Auntie. I think they were horrid *not* to know."

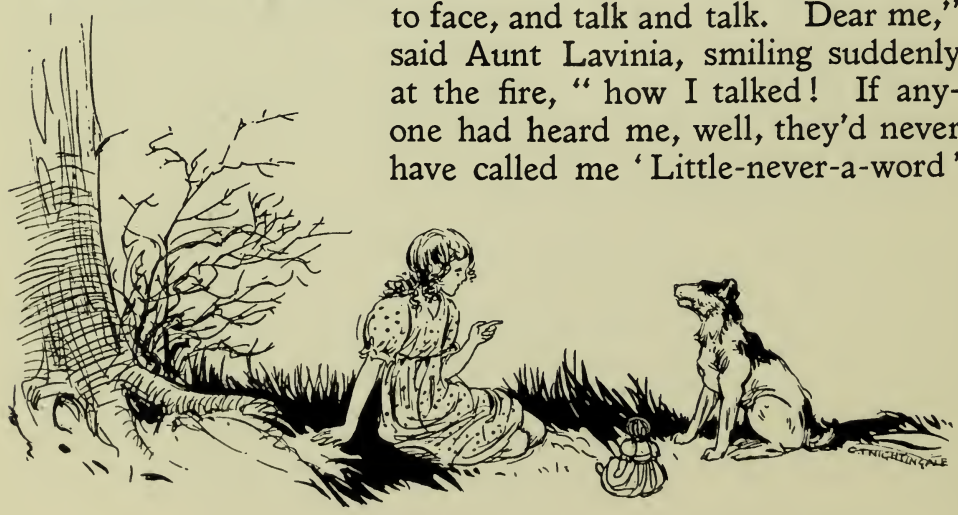
"No, darling, they weren't. It was entirely my own fault. They couldn't possibly have guessed. And my Mamma went on, 'It's rather heart-achy, John, isn't it?' And she sighed. Then she held out her hand to me. 'I'm afraid you don't love Mamma very much, do you, Anne?' And

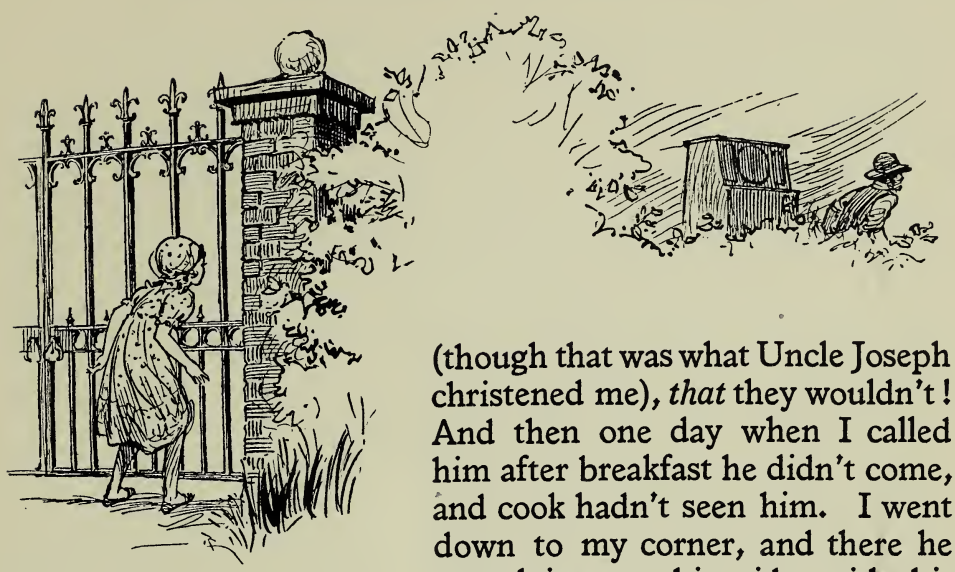
I felt myself getting very red, and my throat had a big lump in it, so that I just stammered, ' I—I don't know, Mamma.' And then, so that she shouldn't see me cry, I asked in the same breath, ' There's a big thrush on the lawn. May I go out and look at him ?' No, you see, she couldn't possibly know !" And Aunt Lavinia shook her white curls sadly.

" I suppose it was because I was a bundle that mine grew into such a lonely life. I hadn't any brothers and sisters, and there were no other houses near by in those days, and no school. Every day a governess used to come to give me lessons—rather a severe lady who frightened me. So it came about that the only people I talked freely to were Emily (that was my doll) and Spot, the terrier. *My* terrier he was, and he always came with me to the corner of the garden beyond the elder-tree; past the strips of cabbages and peas—*you* know."

" *I* know," said Anne.

" ' Lavinia's corner ' they called it. And there we'd sit, I with my arm round him sometimes, or sometimes just face to face, and talk and talk. Dear me," said Aunt Lavinia, smiling suddenly at the fire, " how I talked ! If anyone had heard me, well, they'd never have called me ' Little-never-a-word '





(though that was what Uncle Joseph christened me), *that* they wouldn't! And then one day when I called him after breakfast he didn't come, and cook hadn't seen him. I went down to my corner, and there he was, lying on his side with his dear rough body going up and down, up and down, so quickly as he breathed. When he saw me he tried to get up and come to me, and somehow he couldn't. So he just gave one little wag of his stump of a tail instead, and when I dropped on the grass beside him he lifted his head and smiled at me. Then he didn't move any more. . . . I knew what had happened. You see, I'd found dead birds sometimes. And once there had been a rabbit; I had gone into the kitchen when cook was skinning it."

Anne gulped. "I don't think, Auntie," she said in a strangled voice, "I don't think I can bear it. Will you hurry, please—hurry very quickly. Why, oh why was it?"

"He'd been poisoned," Aunt Lavinia answered; "and after that there was only Emily." She waited a moment.

"But, oh dear! I'm not getting on to Mother Bunch, am I? I told you it wouldn't be a proper story."

"It's lovely," Anne sobbed, "lovely; only please be quick."

"I'm afraid I'm a foolish old thing, darling. There now." She dabbed a little wisp of handkerchief, first to her own eyes, then to Anne's, and resumed.

"I must get on sensibly, I really must. You know it's the very first room in the upstairs corridor that I want to get on to."

"Mummy's room," said Anne helpfully.

"Only then it was the Red Room."

"The Red Room?"

"Yes, it was the spare-room, and it had a great four-poster bed all hung round with red damask curtains; and there were red curtains to the windows, and reddish mahogany furniture, and a reddish patterned carpet, and chairs with red covers; and I knew Mother Bunch had a red cloak and petticoat, and there never seemed to be a time when I didn't know, too, that she lived in that room."

"But who was she?" asked Anne.

"Well, I expect that's another part of my being an oddity bundle. You see, I don't know. I don't know if I'd read or been told something, and so built up a kind of fancy, or whether I'd just imagined it all for myself. But there, as sure as could be, she was; and I was—oh, dreadfully frightened."

"Why?" said Anne.

Aunt Lavinia lifted her two very small and rather tremulous hands and pressed them to her forehead.

"I don't think anyone could possibly tell a tale as badly as I do," she said; "I ought to have explained that before. You see, that was another of the outside things that were quite different from the in. I seem to be always saying what a silly little girl I was, but I think this was the silliest silliness of all. The truth is that there were such a lot of things that I was frightened of—caterpillars, and men with barrel-organs, and black cats and—well, most of all, the dark—dark cupboards, and dark rooms, and dark shadows under the trees."

Anne drew away and sat up very straight on her stool.

"Auntie dear," said she, "if you don't mind my saying so, I do think that *was* very silly."

"Yes, darling," Aunt Lavinia said meekly, "it was. I knew it was even then, and that was why I never let anyone know anything about it, except Emily—and Spot, of course. Spot knew everything."

Anne leaned back again.

"Do you think it would matter if you just didn't mention him—didn't mention him at all, I mean?" she said.

"I won't. So nobody knew. Mamma always said: 'Anne's so imperturbable—never afraid of anything, are you, dear?' And of course I said I wasn't."

"But that wasn't true," put in Anne with some severity.

"No, dear," agreed the other. "Sometimes I'm afraid I wasn't very truthful either. I remember once, on a Sunday evening, all the servants were out and I was sitting up for supper. And when we came to the pudding course, why, they'd forgotten to put on the custard. It was a summer evening, only just getting dusky, and Mamma said, 'Run down to the cellar, Anne, and get it. It will be on the slate

slab beneath the window, so there'll be light enough to see it.' And when I got down, there, indeed, was the dim light filtering down through the gratings of the window, and what *do* you think was bobbing about in the bowl of custard? Why, a little brown mouse! Did I say mice were another thing I was afraid of? Oh dear, gracious goodness me! I don't think I can possibly tell you how frightened I was. My heart bumped and swurgled and bumped, until I really thought it *must* jump right out of my mouth."

"Whatever——" cried Anne. "Whatever did you do?"

"Well, first I ran back to the big stone stairs and began to clamber up them. And then I stopped and said to myself—or perhaps it was my pride said to myself—'They'll laugh at you. They'll know you've only been *pretending* to be brave.' And then another little voice spoke, and I think this was a better little voice than the other: 'But Mamma thinks you really *are* brave,' it said, 'and she'll be disappointed.' So I went slowly down again; and I stuck my hand in the custard and lifted out the mouse. And—swish—I gave quite a loud little scream as he sprang into the air. He was gone like a flash and had disappeared down a crack in the brick floor. In the faint light I could see a sort of fringe of custard either side, where the tight fit of it had scraped it off him as he went. Then with my handkerchief I cleaned the edge of the bowl—it had got a little splashed—and carried it up. Mamma said: 'What a long time you've been, child! And, dear me, how red your cheeks are! I hope you aren't going to have a chill. And now you've gone quite white. What a funny little bundle you are!' And Papa said: 'I believe the child's frightened.' Then I think I must have got very red again. I

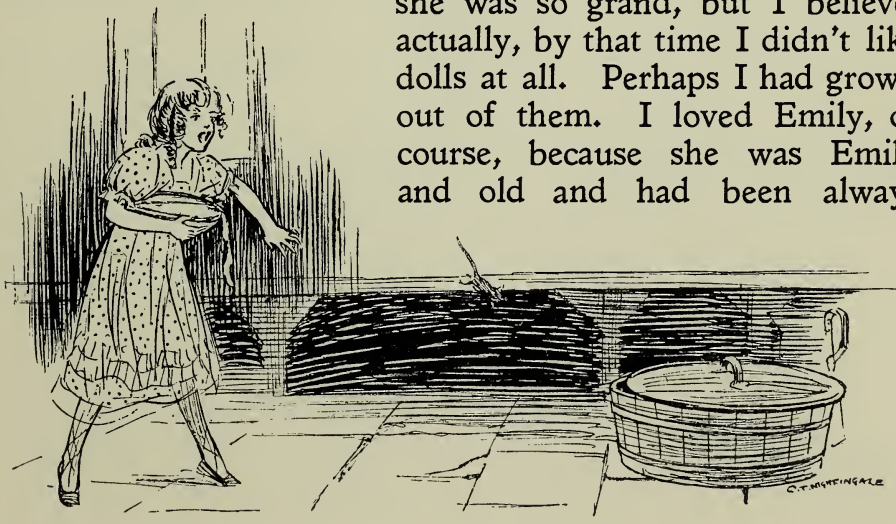
felt red; and I cried out angrily that I wasn't frightened—not the least little bit."

Aunt Lavinia paused.

"And so perhaps you can understand how frightened I was of the Red Room. I was afraid Mother Bunch would jump out at me from under the bed or the wardrobe, or from behind the window-curtains, or even out from the half-open door itself as I passed it on my way to bed."

She gave a little shiver, and Anne, who was really a most understanding little soul, patted her softly.

"Well, it was soon after Spot died—oh, and I wasn't to mention him!—just after my eighth birthday, then, when something happened which altered everything. I must tell you I had been given by my godmother a very especial doll, a lovely doll, as tall, perhaps taller than my waist, with a wax face and beautiful corkscrew curls of real hair. And quite suddenly I hated her. I had named her Gwendoline because she was so grand, but I believe, actually, by that time I didn't like dolls at all. Perhaps I had grown out of them. I loved Emily, of course, because she was Emily and old and had been always



with me. Emily always, like Spot, listened and understood. But Gwendoline I suddenly hated. Slowly and deliberately I took off her fine clothes and set her up against the wall and stared at her. The more I stared, the more I hated. One blue eye, I noticed, was slightly bigger than the other, and that irritated me to a kind of fury. I leaned forward and with my finger pushed in first one and then the other. Then I shook her. The eyes, rattling about inside her head, gave me, I remember, a kind of fierce pleasure. After that I fetched the poker from the fireplace and smashed in her smiling wax face with its poor pink cheeks, its beautiful red lips, and its empty eye sockets; and I fished out the glass eyes with my wicked little fingers and ground them under my feet. And lastly—oh, what do you think I did lastly?"

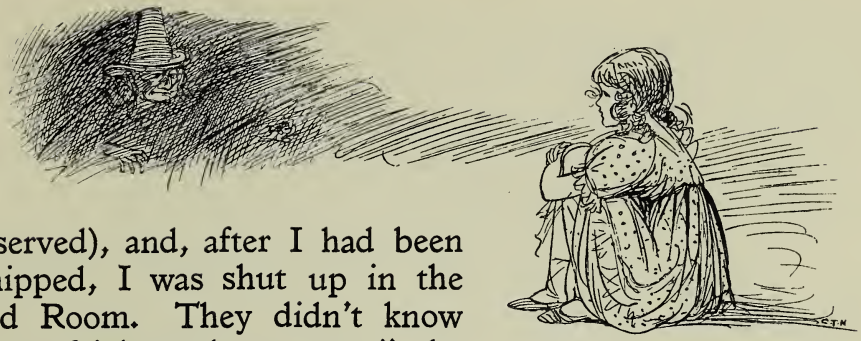


Anne was staring with horror-stricken eyes.

"I got Susan's scissors and I cut up her poor body and her arms and her legs into little pieces, and I scattered the sawdust all about the floor. Then I picked up my petticoats and danced all over it. I was dancing, with my back to the door, when Susan came in."

"Whatever did she say?"

"I don't think," said Aunt Lavinia discreetly, "I don't think I'll tell you just what she said. But she took me to Mamma and Papa and I was whipped (which I very richly



deserved), and, after I had been whipped, I was shut up in the Red Room. They didn't know I was frightened, you see," she added, as Anne opened her mouth to speak. But Anne was not to be silenced.

" I think it was wicked of them," she burst out vehemently.

" Oh no, no !" said Aunt Lavinia. " Of course, they didn't know. The moment I heard the door lock," continued she, " I rushed at it and shouted and stamped and kicked. They *must* have been astonished, for, naughty though I often was, I am glad to say I had never, never behaved like that before. But of course they took no notice. After a time, when I grew tired of such dreadful doings, I began to look around and to peer fearfully into all the corners. I longed to look into the cupboards and under the bed but dared not. Soon, too, the dusk would be coming, and I did not know how long they meant to leave me there, and all at once I began to tremble. I don't think—I really don't think I could have been very well, for that also was a thing I had never done before. I shook and shook just like a bit of quaking grass. I knew Mother Bunch was there, you see, and I was terrified. At last, all in a heap in the middle of the room with my chin propped on my knees, I began to picture what she looked like. A red petticoat, a red cloak, out of which horrible claw-like

hands would poke, nut-cracker nose and chin, black eyes that bored into you—and—and—— Suddenly as I sat there, shaking and imagining, I thought I heard a sound. It *was* dusk now, or almost dusk."

Anne stirred slightly—a squirm half of sympathetic nervousness, half of delicious expectation.

"There it was again! Yes, I did hear a sound—a movement. It seemed to come from the bed. And then I heard a voice also, and that came from the bed too. I wish I could describe it to you. It was not unlike me, Anne—a sort of bundle, I mean—a mixture. I always was a silly fanciful thing, you know, but it seemed a little bit like the brook water at the end of the Long Acre where it trickles over that little slide of stones, a little bit like harebells in the wind, and a little bit like the nightingale whispering just before it sings."

She stopped, and Anne, turning her face, stared up at her.

"A little bit like a summer evening when the church door is open and the music drifts to you ever so far away over the fields and hedges, where you're walking, perhaps all by yourself, amongst the moths and the stir of the field-mice and the big buzzing beetles and the sleepy swish-swish of the poppies and the corn. Such a number of things it brought to mind—such a number, and yet so very soft was it, Anne, that only by straining my ears could I manage to hear the words at all.

"'Why, little Lavinia!' it said. 'The years I've waited for you, and now what minutes you're wasting before you come and talk to me!' And oh, the love in it, Anne! It brought the tears to my eyes and an ache so achy to my throat that I couldn't answer a word. I just clambered on to the bed, and there she was, leaning up against the hump where



I just clambered on to the bed and there she was.

the pillows were with her arms outstretched. I didn't notice the red cloak and the petticoat. All I looked at was the face."

Aunt Lavinia turned her own and peered down at the little girl's beside her.

"Ah, my dear!" she said, "it was the very loveliest face in all the world—as lovely as my mother's. Only just because, for some strange reason, it drew out of me the expression of that bubbling love of my own, why, it seemed to me for the moment almost lovelier. I tumbled into those inviting arms, and as she held me," said Aunt Lavinia, "it was as though all the loneliness of all my life slipped away and I knew I'd never be lonely any more."

Anne heaved a big sigh.

"Oh, Auntie, I'm so glad," she whispered, stroking the black silk smooth over the old knees. "It was beautiful, wasn't it?"

But the old lady did not hear her.

"I don't know how long I nestled there. I talked and talked, sometimes whispering, sometimes speaking aloud, and I told her, I do believe, all the thoughts I'd ever had—everything I'd ever told to Emily, to Spot, to my own lonely little self. As she listened to me she held me very close, pressing me every now and then rather extra as if to say, 'I quite understand,' which of course she did. When I had finished she scrumpled me harder than ever for a moment, and put me down on the floor.

"'Silly, naughty little goose,' said she. 'And now there's Susan coming up the stairs to release you. Down you go to Mamma. Put your arms round her neck, just as you have put them round mine, and tell her how sorry you are.'"



"And did you?"

"Yes, of course."

"And was that all?" asked Anne, after a pause.

"Dear me, no. It was only the beginning. After that, as you may imagine, instead of being afraid of the Red Room, it was just the place of all others where I most wanted to be. I used to steal up whenever I could, shut the door, and clamber on the bed. She was always there. Sometimes we sat on the broad window-seat together and looked out over the fields and the river and she told me stories—the stories, if I may say so, which grew up out of the things we saw there. Sometimes, as a rare and precious treat, she'd point to the river twisting like a silver ribbon into the distance, and say, 'Let's pretend we're sailing.' Or to the fieldfares pecking and grubbing in the furrows, 'Whish, whish!' she'd cry, and when, as though something had startled them, they rose, 'Quick, Lavinia, let's pretend we're going too.' And the wonderful part of it is that whatever Mother Bunch pretended always became real."

Again Anne heaved a sigh of utter satisfaction.

"I hope you pretended all the pretends you possibly could," she said.

"I believe," answered Aunt Lavinia—and her eyes grew dreamy and faraway—"I believe—that is to say, if I weren't so very old and so stupid at explaining things—I believe I could fill a whole book with them. And then, one day, something else happened. You know my corner of the garden, Anne, and how very secluded it is?"

Anne nodded.

"Hidden away so that no one from the house could ever see unless they came right down to it—through the kitchen garden and round the hornbeam hedge?"

"*I* know," said Anne.

"So (I'm afraid this is very naughty, dear) I actually got into the habit of climbing the red fruit-wall, dropping down into the fields, and wandering away all by myself adventuring."

"Auntie! Real *long* adventures?"

"I'm afraid so," said Aunt Lavinia apologetically.

"But weren't you afraid of being lost or stolen by gipsies or——"

Aunt Lavinia interrupted.

"No. You see, I never was afraid of that kind of fright. In fact, *my* frights were never sensible frights at all, as I'm sure you'll already have realized. And one place I was particularly fond of adventuring to was Cinder Hill."

"Oh, Auntie! But that's miles away."

"No, not miles. Not even two miles. Nothing like so far as Bolsover, for instance, which I once wandered to.

You stand on the edge there, you know, and it seems as if hundreds of miles of country stretch beneath you, with the blue moors in the distance. And you pretend you can see inside all the tiny pink and whitewashed cottages and——" She checked herself. "But there! It was Cinder Hill where it happened. I wonder do they still call it Frost's Field—the big pasture on the left—Anne?"

Anne wriggled ecstatically.

"Was it there?"

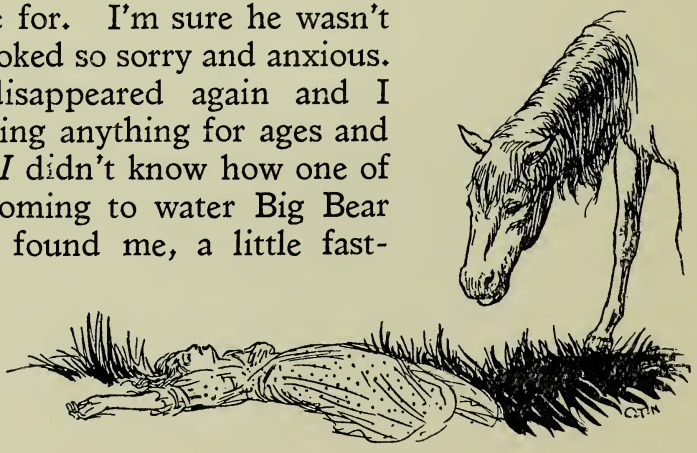
"He used to graze his horses there in those days. Three of them. People called them Frost's greys, but *I* called them Big Bear, Middle Bear, and Little Bear. They went like that. Just a little smaller and smaller, though even Little Bear was big enough in all conscience. I used to sit on the top of the wall and watch them. To me, then, it seemed a quite enormous wall, and I suppose it *is* very tall. They were always spoken of as very wild—the horses, I mean—and perhaps they were. I know I've seen them scampering round and round, their manes and tails flying like sea-foam, and their heels pounding for all the world like a roll of thunder that was never going to stop. And one day when I clambered the wall, there beneath it, almost, indeed, leaning up against it, fast asleep in the sun, was Little Bear. You never saw anything quite so delicious, Anne, as his round sleek back. I was astride the wall like a boy, with my little, rather long frock all scrumpled up (I can't think what Susan would have said if she'd seen me; such a tomboy I was sometimes!), and one long thin leg almost touched his shiny grey coat. I never gave two thoughts, Anne. Just one was enough, and in a second I had drawn up my other leg and dropped.

Anne gasped.



"On to his back?"

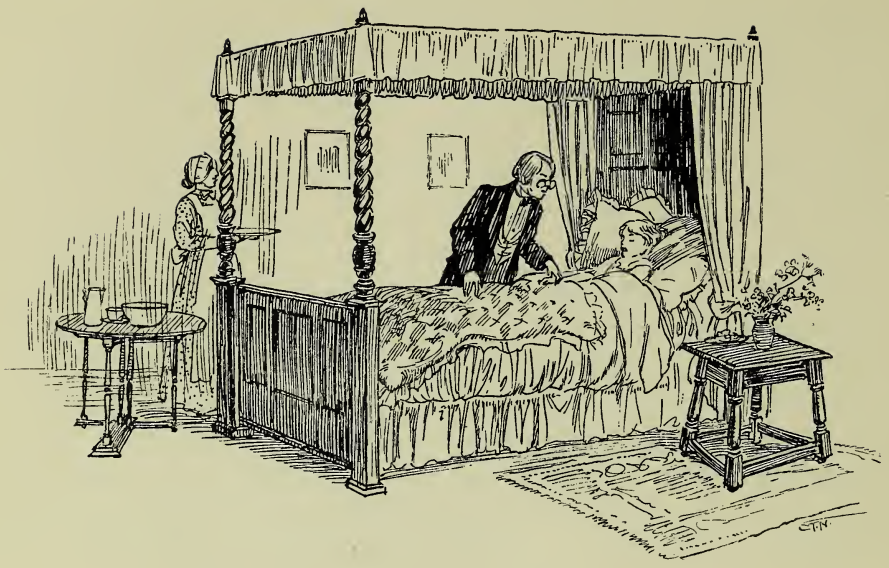
"On to his back. Can't you imagine what a fright he got, poor dear—a great, big, bumping thing out of the clouds and the blue summer sky he was dozing beneath? Something terrible had happened to his poor back—something had struck him and he *must* get away from it. And so he did. I suppose for about a dozen yards I held on, clutching tight to his thick mane; then off I came as he swung round in a new direction, and I didn't remember any more for a long time. The first thing I did remember was opening my eyes to see a long grey horse-face stretching down to me. I believe that when he got over his alarm and began to think properly, his heart misgave him and he came back to look at the funny, crumpled, pink bundle on the grass, which somehow he felt responsible for. I'm sure he wasn't really wild. He looked so sorry and anxious. Then the face disappeared again and I stopped remembering anything for ages and ages. Of course, *I* didn't know how one of the farm-hands, coming to water Big Bear and his brothers, found me, a little fast-asleep heap with all three greys now clustered around staring at me.



I didn't know how they carried me home, so gently, on a sort of hurdle of fencing; how I was taken into the Red Room, because the Red Room was the very first they got to; how two doctors, with very grave faces, undressed me, and felt every inch of my poor little bruised body, and stitched up a great cut on my head; how all my hair was cut off and how for days I lay quite still, almost as if I were dead. I do very hazily remember waking up one day and seeing the red curtains close to my face swinging to and fro in the wind from the open window. I remember, too, trying to speak and being surprised in a vague sort of way, because no voice came. I remember stretching a hand, wonderingly and very feebly, to touch the wafting curtains, trying to sit up, and again being surprised because the lower half of my body seemed still asleep. Then I suppose I became unconscious again, or rather slid back into something worse than unconsciousness—a strange dark country of delirium and terror. Once again I woke, this time quite sensible. Yes, I was in the Red Room—in bed—in my nightgown too. How funny! And here was someone I had never seen before; a person in a blue print dress (rather like cook's), with an odd sort of cap on her head. I studied her face and decided I liked it. Then I became aware that she held a cup in her hand and was talking to me.

" ' See,' she said coaxingly, ' a nice cup of soup for a nice little girl. Open your mouth and shut your eyes! *What* a nice game!'

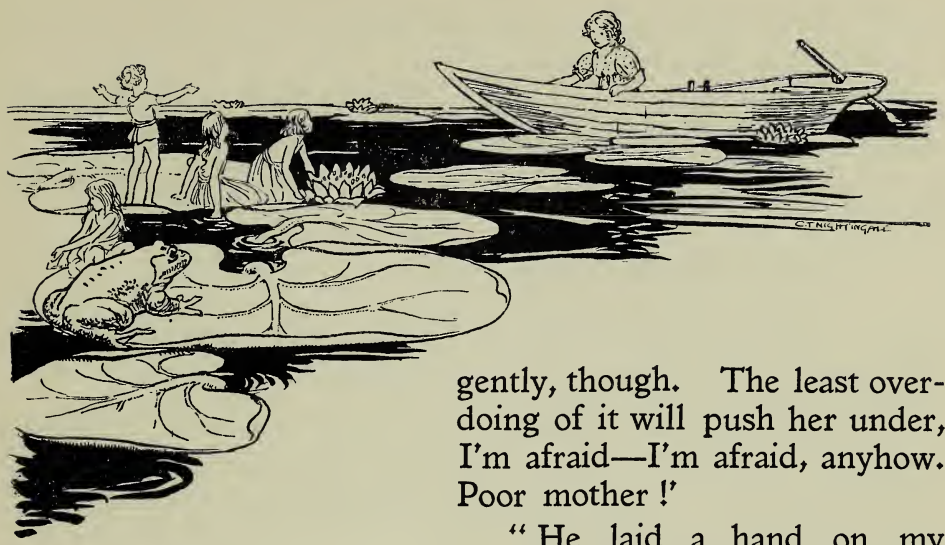
" Instantly I revised my decision. She was silly and I *didn't* like her. But in any case I should not have responded. I was far too tired to open my mouth or to think of swallowing —far too tired. So I shut my eyes again and paid no heed. Then I felt a warm spoon pressing against my lips, and, pursing



them extremely tight, with the tiniest movement of my head sent the 'nice soup' trickling down my neck. But the country I slid back into this time was a new country altogether —a land indescribably beautiful, a land of flowers and sunshine, of woods and bird-song, a land of rivers, where all day long one lay in boats that cleft the silver ripples so smoothly, so gently, that the very rhythm of their soft motion was itself a lullaby.

"'She's drifting,' a voice said suddenly. It was a man's voice, gruff, and it jarred on the delicious peace. I peeped angrily beneath my eyelashes to see who it was and what he wanted. Why, it was Dr. Smith! How I hated him! Couldn't someone tell him to be quiet? There he was again!

"'She's drifting, Nurse. You *must* rouse her a little somehow. Just to get food into, and effort out of her. Very



gently, though. The least overdoing of it will push her under, I'm afraid—I'm afraid, anyhow. Poor mother !'

" He laid a hand on my wrist. I shut my eyes very tight and smiled to myself. Of course I was 'drifting'; and nobody should stop me. It was odd, perhaps, that they should know all about it—about the soft swing-swing of the fairy boats, but silly to think I should be coaxed out of it for horrible things like swallowing soup. So back I went to my boats and my green banks and the kelpies dabbling their fingers over the edges of the water-lily leaves. I would smack Nurse, as he called her, when next she bothered me.

" But it was Mamma's voice I heard next.

" ' Darling, *do* try !'

" She sounded so loving and so sorrowful that almost I did try. But it was no good. I was so tired. Weakly I turned my mind away from it and smiled and sailed. And then, Anne, all in a moment, in the bow of that boat of mine I perceived a figure perched, facing me, looking at me.

" ' Mother Bunch !' I cried, and started to scramble to her.

" Mother Bunch nodded.

" ' That's right,' she said. ' But gently now, ever so gently. Oh, clumsy ! Don't rumple the bedclothes.'

" (Mother Bunch was being silly, now. *Bedclothes* indeed !)

" Then she shook her fist at me.

" ' What a Newfoundland puppy it is !' said she. ' Stay where you are, do !' And it was she who scrambled over the seats and the rowing-slats till she sat beside me.

" ' Anne Lavinia Horsley !' she said severely, ' you're a naughty, cowardly, lazy, obstinate, pernickety bundle of bothersomeness. You drink this immediately, and don't let me have any more nonsense at all.' "

" Oh !" said Anne. " When you were so ill !"

" Yes," said Aunt Lavinia, " she said just that. And she took the soup and the spoon out of Nurse's hand and she fed me, spoonful by spoonful, till there wasn't so much as one-half drop left—nothing but the little brown line round the inside, and quite near the top too, where the rich beef-tea had stained the china.

" ' And let that be the last of any such rubbish !' said Mother Bunch. ' Take it away, Nurse. And as for you, Miss, to sleep with you quick !' "

" Oh dear !" cried Anne, " she sounds quite cross."

" No, she doesn't," answered Aunt Lavinia. " No more than firm—which is just what *all* naughty obstinates most require. And back she came at tea-time, if you please. It was a cup of milk then. And after that there was supper. All night she sat by me, humped against the pillows (much

as when I had first seen her), with her hand beneath my head. Whenever I woke she was looking down at me, and instead of the restless throbbing ache that waking generally brought, there would be a butterfly kiss on my forehead, and off I'd go to sleep again. And so it was, day after day, always she fed me and always, somehow, she made night lovely and sleep what the good God meant it to be—the healer of poor sick bodies, the balm of poor tired souls.

"Gradually with returning strength my mind cleared and I began really to notice things. First it was the red curtains again and the wall-paper and a big bowl of flowers on the wide window-seat. Then I noticed Nurse and watched her, and decided that after all, and despite her baby-silliness about the soup, I did like her. And then all at once I noticed something else—somebody quite close to me—Mamma sitting by the bed, her hand on the coverlet with my own curled up inside it. I was rather surprised at this, and, as I pondered over it, I found tucked away in my queer and still somewhat fogged little mind (very much as my hand was tucked in Mamma's) a kind of conviction, knowledge, intuition—how shall I say it, Anne, for those are all difficult words?—a kind of *feeling*, then, that she had been there all the time. And with that feeling came a big surge of warmth and gratitude, so that I tried to twist my fingers round hers and squeeze them. It was the tiniest little movement. Why, even to me it seemed so faint and far away it might have happened at the other side of the world, but *she* felt it—bless you—Mamma felt it. Her face, which had been looking out of the window, turned, and in her eyes as they met mine—well, really, I'm sure, quite sure that no one ever saw so much love as I saw there. I stretched out my other arm, stretched it out all by

myself (though of course *I* didn't know it was the very first time I'd done anything so energetic ever since the day they had laid me on that bed), and there came a sort of happy sob into my throat as I shouted (or tried to shout—really it sounded more like a frog-croak), 'Mamma!' And then, Anne, just because I was afraid of being silly and crying, how *do* you think I finished? 'Oh, Mamma, darling—I'm so hungry.'"

Aunt Lavinia took out her wisp of handkerchief and wiped her eyes.

"I'm being silly again," said she. "But somehow it was like finding Spot and Emily and Mother Bunch all rolled into one, as well as the Mamma I had loved so long and so passionately, whom I had thought so far away and yet who had been so close by all the time."

Again Aunt Lavinia wiped her eyes. Anne didn't quite know what to do, so she patted the black silk knee and whispered, "Dear Aunt Lavinia!"

"And so," continued the old lady, "after that I got better quite quickly, and almost before I knew it I was whisked off to the seaside and was lying in the sun watching the white foamy waves. And soon I was building sand-castles, and paddling, and riding a shaggy grey donkey, and getting so brown that, had it not been for my clothes, no one would ever have known me. And all the time this lovely new Mamma (who wasn't a new Mamma at all, if only I hadn't been too foolish to see it)—all the time she was with me, and I think both of us were ready to burst with happiness."

She was silent so long that Anne opened her mouth to speak.

"And what about Mother Bunch, you are going to say?"

Anne nodded vigorously.

"Well, when I came home and was trotting up to my dear old nursery, which I hadn't seen since before the accident, Mamma put her hand on my shoulder to stay me.

"'We'll go together,' said she.

"She took my hand and we ran up the stairs (for she was really quite a young Mamma), but, instead of following the long corridor to the second flight of stairs, she threw open the very first door we came to.

"'Welcome to your new kingdom, Princess Lavinia,' said she, pretending to drop a curtsey. And there, in place of the big four-poster and the red curtains and all, was my own little white bed in the corner, the loveliest little rosebud paper on the walls, little white wardrobe and chairs, and little white dimity curtains with roses curling all over them to match the roses on the house-walls that pushed their faces against the lattice and even thrust into the very room.

"I couldn't say anything. I just stared and stared—feasted my eyes, as they say; and then I looked at Mamma; and though I was sure the tears were coming up into my eyes I wasn't ashamed, because I knew *this* Mamma understood.

"'We learned, when you were ill, how much you loved it, Princess Lavinia,' she went on, and at that I flew at her and we hugged each other until we hadn't any breath left."

"And Mother Bunch didn't live there any more?" asked Anne disappointedly.

"Well," answered Aunt Lavinia, "she did and she didn't. What I mean is, she wasn't quite the same Mother Bunch. She came to me, of course—the very first night she came to me, but, somehow, I knew it was different, although I couldn't

quite make out *how*. It was only after she had been to me many times that I managed, as it were, to define what that difference was. She was dressed just the same—red cloak, red petticoat, high-heeled shoes and all—what was different was the face. It wasn't like Mamma's face now, and yet in some odd way it was familiar. There was another curious difference too. Instead of me always talking whilst she listened, or her telling me stories, we just chattered to each other.



"And then one night, I had had my bath and my supper, Nurse was gone, and I was hunched up at my end of the bed and Mother Bunch was hunched at the foot. The moon was streaming in and a long beam of it fell right across her face.

"'Mother Bunch!' I cried. '*I* know what it is! You're not grown-up any more. Why, you've got so young that——'

"Then I stopped, for she had hopped off the bed and was back again in a moment with the little hand-glass from the dressing-table. And there standing by the bed was a little girl in a nightgown laughing so merrily that I had to join in.

"'Look!' said she, holding the mirror before me. The moonbeam was on *my* face now, and—well, really, Anne, it was the most puzzling thing you ever heard of, *so* puzzling that at last I gave up trying to comprehend it."

Anne stared up with parted lips.

"It was *her* face I saw," said Aunt Lavinia, and paused again. "*Her* face," she repeated. Then she hurried a little.

" As for Mother Bunch, once I had the glass in my hand she capered away. When I looked up she was at the window. There she stood, a hand at either side the casement-frame, her mop of hair all gleaming, her little pink toes sticking out from beneath her gown. One foot was on the window-seat, one on the sill itself.

" ' Whish ! Whish !' she called as she used to call to the fieldfares. ' Let's pretend *I'm* going too !'

" And, oh dear me, Anne ! didn't I say to you before, whatever Mother Bunch pretended always and always came true ?"

The corners of Anne's mouth drooped.

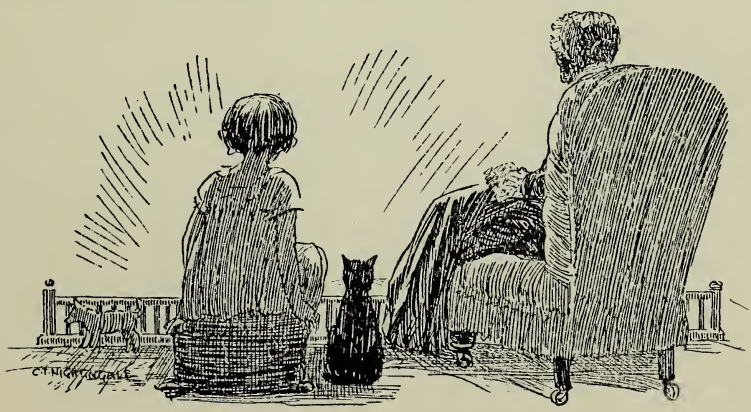
" Do you mean," she whispered, " that she never came back any more ?"

" Never any more."

" But—but I don't understand," Anne said dolefully.

Aunt Lavinia went on staring into the red embers of the fire. She stared for a long time, and then her prim little head began to shake. Slowly from side to side it went, slowly and rather sadly.

" Perhaps," she said, " I don't quite understand myself."



KINGS AND QUEENS

By GERTRUDE MONRO HIGGS

TIMOTHY said the King was old—
Anne said he wasn't;
Timothy said his throne was gold—
Anne said it *wasn't*;
Timothy said his robes were red,
And he even wore his crown in bed,
And *that* was gold—so Timothy said,
But Anne said it wasn't.





Anne thought the Queen looked tall and fair
(Tim said she didn't),
And she threaded pearls thro' her shining hair
(Tim said she didn't);
Her hands were covered with diamond rings,
And she sat all day embroidering things,
Some of her own, but mostly the King's—
But Tim said she didn't.

" Have you ever *seen* the Queen?" asked Tim.
" Well, have *you* seen the King?" said Anne to him.
" Well, no."
" And so
Tomorrow we'll go
And pay them a call,
And then we'll know."













I ONCE saw an Italian conjuror. He was a most unusual conjuror—quite extraordinary, in fact. It was at a country house near London, and the occasion was a birthday party that happened to fall in Christmas week. There were two children, Irma and Tom, aged ten and eleven, and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Slipper. I knew them all well. Mr. Slipper and I had been to school and Cambridge together years ago, and we called him, of course, "Old Slipper," because of his fondness for practical jokes. Mrs. Slipper was a jolly woman and very fat, with a passion to learn flying and have her own private Moth. But her husband objected. "If you crashed, my dear," he warned her, "you'd bounce like a tennis ball all over Kent." The children were great friends of mine, too. They called me Uncle, though I was no more an uncle really than their father was a slipper.

The birthday was Slipper's birthday, but the party, though nominally for him, was actually more for Irma and Tom. He enjoyed a good party, and always made a great success of it.

Something unusual always happened, and you never knew what form the surprise would take. I was delighted to be asked down to stay the night; and the old country house, already decked with holly and mistletoe, and with a roaring log-fire in the great hall, was a cheerful sight. Slipper met me himself in the hall.

"And what's your special stunt this time?" I asked him. "You've got something up your sleeve, I'm sure."

Old Slipper's face lit up. "I have," he answered mysteriously. "This time it's a conjuror. An Italian conjuror. Wonderful fellow! A friend at the Italian Embassy told me about him. He's the best Italian conjuror I ever saw——"

"Have you seen any other Italian conjurors?" I asked.

"Well, no, as a matter of fact I haven't," replied Old Slipper, "but he's marvellous just the same." He was very enthusiastic about him. "And very cheap too," he added with a grin.

"How much?" asked Tom, who had crept up to listen behind us.

His father did not answer that, but told the boy to go away. "He has performed for Mussolini," he went on to me. "Wait till you see him! The only bother is he speaks no English, so I shall have to interpret for him. He's a Signor Marmalato." Then, catching sight of Tom again behind my back, he drove him off more vigorously. "And don't you tell anyone about it," he scolded, "or you'll spoil the surprise. Now get away with you."

This time Tom obeyed. He told no one but Irma. "It's going to be a conjuror," he whispered to her a moment later. "An Italian. Called Old Marmalade. And father's going



to interrupt him!" The excitement of the double secret was very great.

The party started with games out of doors until the rain came on with the first darkness, and then we all went in to an enormous tea with crackers and indoor games. The performance was to begin at six o'clock, and a platform with a curtain had been built at the end of the big hall. We all trooped down to take our seats. It was already a quarter past six by then, but the delay was caused by two children being sick from too much cake and ice-cream—not really sick, but only what Old Slipper called "sickish." It was decided they would feel all right again once the conjuring began. They would forget about it. They did.

We were a large party in that hall. There were a number of other children invited from the countryside, and there were various aunts, cousins, friends, and neighbours in the audience. The Vicar was there, with Mrs. Vicar. Dr. Sheepshanks from the village sat in the front row, the deaf old Post Master beside him. The Station Master, a great friend of Tom's, came late because there was fog further down the line, but Harbottle the Butler, Mrs. Mumps the Housekeeper,



Digger the Head Gardener, and one or two other old family servants, including Swoop the Chauffeur, a big fellow, occupied the chairs in the back. Behind all these—and there must have been nearly fifty people there—I sat with Tom and Irma up against the wall. We chose these seats because we could go on munching cake and sweets without being seen.

Mr. Slipper and the Vicar were already on the platform, ready to announce Signor Marmalato, whom nobody had seen yet, for he had been having a meal, it seemed, in the servants' hall before the show. We waited impatiently, shuffling our feet and whispering. Excitement grew.

"He'll borrow hats and take rabbits out of them," said Tom to me below his breath. "I know how *that's* done." He sniffed. "And he'll make a lot of things disappear, like rings and watches or something."

It was Irma, whispering under her cloud of falling hair, who made the more suggestive comment: "Perhaps he'll disappear himself," she whispered. "I shouldn't be surprised—would *you*, Uncle?"

Our talk was interrupted then by the Vicar making a little speech, declaring the show open, and adding he was extremely

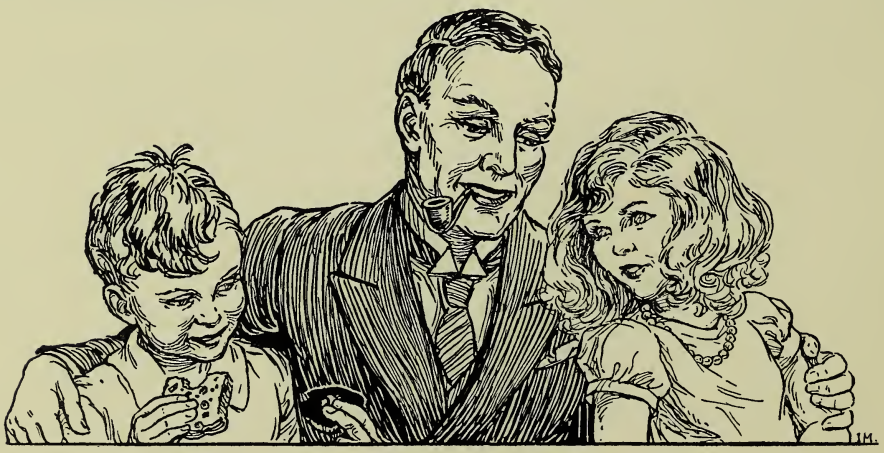
sorry he could not wait to see it himself because of some Church business at the vicarage at half-past six. While we clapped him he went away, followed by poor Swoop the Chauffeur, who had to drive him back, and Mr. Slipper at once stepped forward and announced the conjuror. He was an admirable speaker. He only spoke two short sentences:

"Signor Marmalato, the marvellous Italian conjuror who has performed by command before Mussolini and the King of Italy," was the first sentence. And the second was even shorter: "As he speaks no English, I'm going to interpret for him." A few minutes passed while he arranged the table and chair beside him.

"There," whispered Irma, "I *knew* it wasn't 'interrupt.'"

But Mr. Slipper had now drawn the curtain with a magnificent flourish, and the conjuror we had all been waiting for stood before us, waiting for the burst of applause to quiet down.

He was certainly an Italian. A large, fat, dark man with broad shoulders and a long black beard, and he stood nearly



six feet in his socks. His evening suit hung on him rather baggily. He wore palely coloured glasses, so that his eyes were hard to see, and he screwed these up a little when he smiled and bowed. He bowed so profoundly that the thick black hair fell forward over his forehead, flinging back as he straightened up again to his full height. Mr. Slipper, beside him, looked quite small.



"*He'll* never disappear, silly!" Tom said audibly to Irma. He wanted to get his own back over that "interrupt."

"Hush-sh-sh-sh!" came from the expectant audience, as the conjuror moved across the little stage. He rolled up his sleeves, waved his wand in circles through the air, his black beard wagging like something on a clothes-line, and prepared for his first trick. There was deep silence over the big hall; you could have heard a pin drop; only the crackling of the logs in the great open fire-place was audible. Then came Slipper's voice, explaining what the trick was to be.

"It's just a little opening one," he told the audience, "and consists in taking money from the air. I wish we could all do it! Later, you will witness more astonishing things. Signor Marmalato likes to begin with the simpler kind."

The conjuror bowed, smiled, advanced two steps, and produced an opera hat from his waistcoat pocket apparently. Opening it with a click, he rattled his wand round the inside, laid the wand on the table behind him—turning his back to do so—and then picked silver coins from the air with the hand thus freed. It was, of course, the usual " palming " trick, but it was neatly, cleverly done, and we heard the half-crowns dropping into the open hat with a jolly clinking sound. He picked one out of his knee, another from the electric light bulb over his head, and a third from the tip of Mr. Slipper's nose. We watched him closely, but he never fumbled. Three more coins came out of his beard.



" That beard isn't fair, you know," said Tom audibly. " He could hide a cow in it !"

" He's got to hide things *somewhere,*" Irma defended him. " Try it yourself, if you think it's so easy." Irma was on the conjuror's side from the beginning. It was Tom who was in critical mood. But no one else criticized, for the trick, even if old, was cleverly done, and a burst of applause followed when Old Marmalade poured eight half-crowns out of the tilted hat and signified with a deep bow that the trick was finished.

While Mr. Slipper then announced the next item, the conjuror stood behind him, rolling up his sleeves still higher. He had very brawny arms.

" Some muscle !" whispered Tom—the only word of praise he uttered the whole evening. " I bet he could pull himself up a rope all right !"

To tell the truth, I somehow rather shared Tom's disapproval of the Italian. It wasn't that his tricks were poor or badly done, because all were clever and successful. It was something else I didn't like about the fellow. It was a pity he could not speak, for a conjuror depends enormously upon a stream of " patter " that helps to distract attention. While listening to his jokes and laughing at them, the eye forgets to follow the swift movements of the hands. While we laugh, turning our heads for a second, he has time to whip something out of his waistcoat or pocket before we notice it. I admitted this handicap in Signor Marmalato's case. But it was something else that made me rather turn against the big fellow. All conjurors, of course, must be humbugs, for it's part of their business. It struck me that the Italian was a humbug in another way, though I could not say exactly how or why. I did not like him anyhow; apart from his tricks altogether, I felt I did not trust him quite. He made an unpleasant impression on me. I even rather agreed with Tom, too, that the big beard wasn't " quite fair."

But all this was merely an impression, and while the next trick was being shown I forgot about it. Everybody else in the audience evidently approved of the conjuror. I looked along the packed rows. Dr. Sheepshanks was grinning from ear to ear, Harbottle the Butler wore a careful, dignified smile, the deaf Post Master had his mouth open and a hand to his ear, and the Head Gardener positively looked as though he had witnessed asparagus growing from a tulip bulb. The faces of the children were equally rapt. Tom and myself

seemed the only members of that audience who were not quite satisfied.

Old Slipper, meanwhile, was announcing the next item briefly, and while he did so I saw Marmalato slip behind the curtain foı a second, then slip out again into full view. There was no good reason why he should not have done this, for part of his paraphernalia lay, of course, out of sight there, and he had a perfect right to fetch what he needed. There was a way off the platform to the back part of the house behind the curtain. He had come up the little passage from the kitchen when he first appeared. Tom, too, noticed the sudden dart out and back.

"Gone to fetch a bowl of goldfish from the kitchen," he whispered.

And again Irma put him in his place. "He keeps that, silly, in his tail pocket," she informed us both, with a touch of scorn. And, anyhow, Old Marmalade *did* produce a small bowl of water a few moments later with two living goldfish swimming in it, and produced it uncommonly well too. The trick was perfectly done and a great success, and the roar of applause was louder than before. The Post Master put both hands to his ears, and Harbottle looked a little shocked, while Mr. Slipper on the platform beamed all over with pleasure at the enthusiasm of the audience. His party was certainly a go. He was delighted.

Tom, alone of the audience, did not clap, I noticed, and I myself clapped only twice without much sound to it. I disliked the Italian more and more. I even felt an odd touch of uneasiness, which I could not explain at all. "Humph!" I heard Tom grunt beside me. "I think he's a regular humbug! Old Italian Marmalade!" It was too low for Irma to catch, luckily. "Isn't he splendid!" she kept saying to herself.

And Mr. Slipper, having announced several other tricks which in due course were performed with complete success, then came forward to the front of the platform with more importance, more gravity in his manner, and explained to us carefully that we were now to witness the Signor's best trick of all. It had completely baffled both the King of Italy and Mussolini. The King, indeed, was so pleased that he had given Signor Marmalato a medal for it, a medal the Signor was not wearing at the moment on his breast because, unfortunately, he had left it at home. The trick, he went on to tell us, consisted in turning half a dozen watches into a single alarum clock. He would put the six watches into the opera hat, having first shown us it was empty, then he would wave his magic wand, the watches would have completely disappeared, and in their place a large ordinary alarum clock would be found ticking inside the hat.

The opera hat was first passed round for us to see it; going from row to row, it came to our own chairs in the back and we inspected it carefully—with the exception of Irma, who declared that she knew it was all right anyhow.

"Well, it's father's," announced Tom, "so it probably is." He examined, nevertheless, very thoroughly, and it was passed back on to the platform.

"The next thing," explained Mr. Slipper, "is to have six watches. Signor likes to borrow these from the audience. This proves that they are not trick watches, and, besides, he does not as a rule carry six timepieces in his waistcoat pocket." There was a pause while Mr. Slipper looked over the audience, smiling invitingly from face to face. The Signor stood behind him without moving. "I'll lend mine," said Mr. Slipper, "as a first contribution." And he handed over his big gold

watch to Marmalato, who placed it on the table in full view. Dr. Sheepshanks then handed up the second, a gold repeater set in diamonds, a presentation timepiece, and Mrs. Vicar passed a neat little wrist-watch; the Head Gardener and the deaf Post Master, after someone had shouted to him what was needed, contributed two big silver ones to make five in all. Mr. Slipper laid them all on the table beside his own.



"Only one more wanted now," he called. "Only one. Who will be kind enough to lend the sixth watch to Signor Marmalato for this amazing trick which deceived both the King of Italy and Mussolini? There must be one more watch before we can proceed." His eye ran from face to face enquiringly. He looked straight at me, but I did not feel inclined to lend my nice gold watch. Something warned me to keep it in my pocket. In any case, in spite of Mr. Slipper's eye upon me, I did not move, and a moment later Mrs. Mumps the Housekeeper had passed up her big silver Waterbury, and the number was thus complete.

"I wouldn't let him have mine," whispered Tom, "for anything in the world." It had been a birthday present six weeks before.

"I'd have given him two if I'd had them," was what Irma said.

The six timepieces now lay glittering and sparkling on the little table beside the closed opera hat, which Marmalato next

opened with a click, tapping its inside with his wand and letting us all see that it was quite empty. One by one he then delicately placed each watch inside, tilting the hat so that we could all see them plainly. He set the hat down carefully on the table and moved back a couple of steps towards the curtain behind him, drawing Mr. Slipper with him by the arm. There was thus several feet of clear space between him and the hat; even by stretching out his arm he could not have reached or touched the hat. Raising his wand, he then paused a moment, nodding his head slightly at Mr. Slipper as a sign that a few words of explanation would now be appropriate.

"I think," began Mr. Slipper accordingly, "that the Signor wishes me to draw your attention to the fact that your watches lie quite out of his reach in the hat. I am sure he would wish me to add that no one need feel any anxiety about their particular property. No harm will come to them." A murmur of rather half-hearted laughter greeted this comforting assurance, and then, stepping forward to the front of the platform, Mr. Slipper once again explained what was going to happen. "The six watches," he repeated gravely, "will completely disappear from the hat. In their place we shall be shown a large alarum clock."

He bowed and stepped to one side, so that we could all see the conjuror easily. A wave of excitement ran over the audience, heads were craned forward, eyes were fixed in the rows of set, staring faces. The conjuror slowly raised his wand in the air. He made three circles with it. Then, lowering his arm, he pointed it straight at the hat—and the same instant the lights went out and the hall was plunged in darkness.

"Ohhhhhh!" rose in a chorus from the whole assembly in a collective gasp. Here and there, from the rows of



The conjuror slowly raised his wand in the air.

children, came tiny screams, followed by a general whispering, shuffling of feet, and not a little nervous giggling. It was certainly an effective stroke, that sudden plunging into darkness. No one had expected it. The excitement increased a hundredfold. I felt Tom clutch my hand in the dark. I heard Irma give a tiny gasp of admiration. "How gorgeous!" was what she cried aloud, as we all waited for the lights to go up again, so that we could see the end of the trick.

"Something's fused! Wait a moment. It'll be all right," rose the voice of Mr. Slipper above the chorus of exclamations and questions, now growing louder and louder. For the lights did not go up again, the great hall lay plunged in blackness, which only the log-fire, now dying down, helped to dissipate. No, the lights did not go up again, and the nervousness of the crowded chairs became more audible. Voices called for candles; Nurses were comforting the smaller children, telling them there was nothing to be afraid of; there was a general movement among the older people, and, in the middle of this growing turmoil, a sound reached my ears that I did not quite like. It was a sound of hurrying steps on the platform, a scuffling sound. The steps were heavy. A chair was knocked over. And the truth flashed across me in that instant.

But it was Tom who put it into words.

"The fellow's bolted!" he cried at the top of his voice. "Stop thief! Stop thief!"

It was this cry that instantly set the whole place in a sudden turmoil of confusion, shouting, panic movement. It was like putting a match to a bonfire of straw and gunpowder. But even in the first uproar I caught Irma's little happy voice. "Oh, Uncle!" she piped, clapping her hands together in admiration, "isn't he perfectly magnificent!" I was too

excited myself to pay much attention to her, though this persistent admiration did occur to me as curious. Mrs. Vicar was screaming shrilly: "My watch is set in platinum; it's worth £50!" Dr. Sheepshanks was shouting angrily: "Mine was a presentation from the village!" And several people were yelling "Police! Police!" at the top of their voices.

The confusion at first was very great, for everybody rose to their feet at once, chairs were knocked over, people bumped into one another as they made for the staircase and the hall door, and the shrieks and laughter of all the children, who thought the darkness was all part of the fun and produced on purpose, added to the dreadful bustle. It was clear to me, at any rate, that I was not the only one in that audience who had distrusted the Italian conjuror. Others had had their doubts of him as well. It was a clever scheme anyhow. By this time he was well away, no doubt, and down the drive. Probably he had an accomplice ready with a car.

"Hurry up, Uncle!" I heard in Tom's voice. "I know a short cut. We'll get him in the drive!" His hand tugged at mine like a tight wire. "You stay here, Irma," he shouted above the din. "You're safer indoors!" As he dragged me through the crowded hall, bumping into people, scrambling over fallen chairs, I heard Mr. Slipper's voice shouting to Mrs. Mumps to get candles, and before Tom and I had reached the side door the faint flicker from half a dozen candles stole upon the scene, growing steadily in volume. We rushed along as best we could, and in my excitement I remember wishing we had Swoop with us, Swoop the big muscular Chauffeur. It occurred to me that we might meet him in the drive on his way back from taking the Vicar home. Swoop was just the fellow. He would settle that scoundrel of a conjuror in double



The faint flicker from half a dozen candles stole upon the scene.

quick time. Two other thoughts flashed through me too, though instantly forgotten again in the excitement of the moment: one was that Mrs. Mumps had produced those candles rather quickly; the other that Irma was so delighted with the whole affair. Her happy laughter, her admiration, the last cry she uttered, "Isn't he perfectly magnificent!" these puzzled me for a second before I forgot about them again instantly.

Tom and I now reached the side door. In the growing light I just had time to look back and see the surging mass of people behind us. Dr. Sheepshanks was flashing an electric torch about, Mrs. Vicar was wiping her face with a handkerchief, Harbottle was standing stiff and upright by the wall as though he were serving dishes, while the Head Gardener and the Station Master were both on their knees searching the platform floor, as though the stolen watches might have been dropped as the thief hurriedly escaped.

"Now, Uncle, your best leg forward!" cried Tom, as we got into the open air and looked about us a minute. It was pitch dark, of course. I could not see the outline of a single tree even. The air was bitter after the overheated hall. But Tom knew every inch of the garden, and the same second we were racing down the drive at full tilt. The drive was about half a mile long, and by the time we had covered two hundred yards I realized we were on a wild goose chase. I was rather relieved, therefore, when Tom suddenly stopped dead. "I know, Uncle," he cried. "Let's go back and search the house first. The beggar's probably hiding there. You see, he'd expect us to look for him in the drive. I'll bet he's in the cellar or somewhere. Come on!" I agreed. We dashed back, though not quite so fast. As we neared the

house, every window was suddenly lit up. The light had been turned on again. We rushed through the side door again and bumped straight into Mr. Slipper. Behind him I caught a glimpse of the guests, standing in groups in the main hall, talking with heads together, but with less excitement now. They had evidently quieted down. They were discussing the stolen watches, of course.

"No sign of him out here," cried Tom breathlessly. "Uncle and I have looked everywhere. He's hiding indoors."

"I've telephoned for the police," said Mr. Slipper. "Awful, isn't it? Who would ever have thought of such a thing——?"

"I would," I found breath to say. "In fact, I did."

But Old Slipper did not answer me. "I shall have to buy new watches for everyone," he groaned.

"Your friend at the Italian Embassy might share the expense," I put in. But again he did not answer me.

"I think Tom may be right," was all he said. "We'd better search the house. We'll begin with the cellar and end up with the attics."

"Come on!" shouted Tom, dragging me by the hand, while his father pushed me from behind. But I was a bit tired now of this wild goose chase. I had no particular desire to fumble about in a cold damp cellar, and the chilly attics attracted me still less. I had not lost a watch myself. It was not my affair after all, but Slipper's. He had engaged the swindling conjuror, not I. And I was just going to back out of the proposed hunt when a sound reached my ears that made me think again. It was a voice, the voice of Irma. And she was laughing gaily. The sound came from a room upstairs. I suddenly changed my mind.

"Come on then," I cried. "I'll hunt with you. We'll begin with upstairs first!" And before they could stop me I was up the back staircase and on to the landing that led past the children's quarters. It was Irma's laughing voice that guided me. I reached a door behind which it sounded. I opened this door. Inside I saw Irma, her eyes shining with



excitement, while she laughed and chattered happily. She was standing by the schoolroom table. At her side stood Swoop, the big Chauffeur, a great friend of both children. On the table in front of them lay a big black beard and a pair of coloured glasses. Swoop was still dressed in his baggy, loose evening suit, his sleeves still rolled up. He was showing

her how to palm half-crowns. The six watches lay beside the beard.

"Quite a good surprise, wasn't it?" I heard Old Slipper whispering behind me. "Swoop's a very good amateur conjuror, as you saw. His mother was Italian, so I told the truth, you see."

But it was the way Tom and Irma looked at me that added the final touch. They had both played their parts uncommonly well, I agreed.

"He was chauffeur at the Italian Embassy before he came to me," Old Slipper added, "and he did once show his tricks before Mussolini and the King." He went out then to return the watches to their owners and explain that Signor Marmalato had been caught.

Here follows

Ye Melancholie Tale

and most Tragickall Historye

of

Amelia

Ye Aged Sowe

Who, one time resyding at Callisham, in ye parysshe of Appledrane, in Devon, was foullie and deceiptfullie Done to Death upon a Feigned Charge,

Wherein

is set forth ye Malice and Baseness of Premeditated Crueltie, together with Heaven's Wrath and Punishment of the same

By L. A. G. Strong

An olde Farme stoode in Countrie faire,
Deepe in ye Shade of many a Tree.
Whyte were ye Walles, ye Rooke was thatcht,
Yt was a goodlie Sighte to see.
Thereto a meddowe did adjoyne,
Where underneath ye leafy Boughe
Contente and peacefull did repose
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

She rootyd in ye verdant grasse,
And stay'd secure from alle Alarm
Until two mischief-makynge Boies
One day did come unto ye Farme.
Whyche twayne, when they had chaysed ye Dukkes
And sorelie vexéd Dogge and Cowe,
Mark'd ye Diversion offered by
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.



And nowe on ther they try theire Skille.

Ye twayne an Ayre-Gunne did possesse,
The which they putte to Evil Use.
They shotte ye Hennes, ye Dukkes, ye Geese,
Theyre Conduct was ye verray Dewce!
And nowe on Her they try theire Skille,
—In soothe, a Targette large enow—
Much to ye Perturbation of
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

Ill-use hadde never beene her Lotte,
Of goode thynges shee had aye her choyce:
Soe, greeved and payn'd by this Assaulte,
Lamentynge shee uplifte her Voyce
In Squeeles to split ye verray Skyes.
Ye Farmer heard ye fearefulle Rowe:
He wist that yt proceeded from
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.



Each Bote upon ye Speciall Place.

Ye Farmer was a wylie Manne.
 Thee rushed not straightwaye to her Hide.
"I will creepe by a Secret Waye
 That I may Spye," ye Farmer sayde.
And soe by Stealthe, hydyng himself
 As muche as Nature would allowe,
Thee came and catched them Pottynge at
 Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

Ye Farmer sette hym thenne to smyte
 Each Boie upon ye Speciall Place
Appoynted for ye Chastisement
 Of swich as falle into Disgrace.
Ye Visitacioun was right sore,
 And Justlie merited, I trowe:
Great was ye ioye yt did afford
 Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.



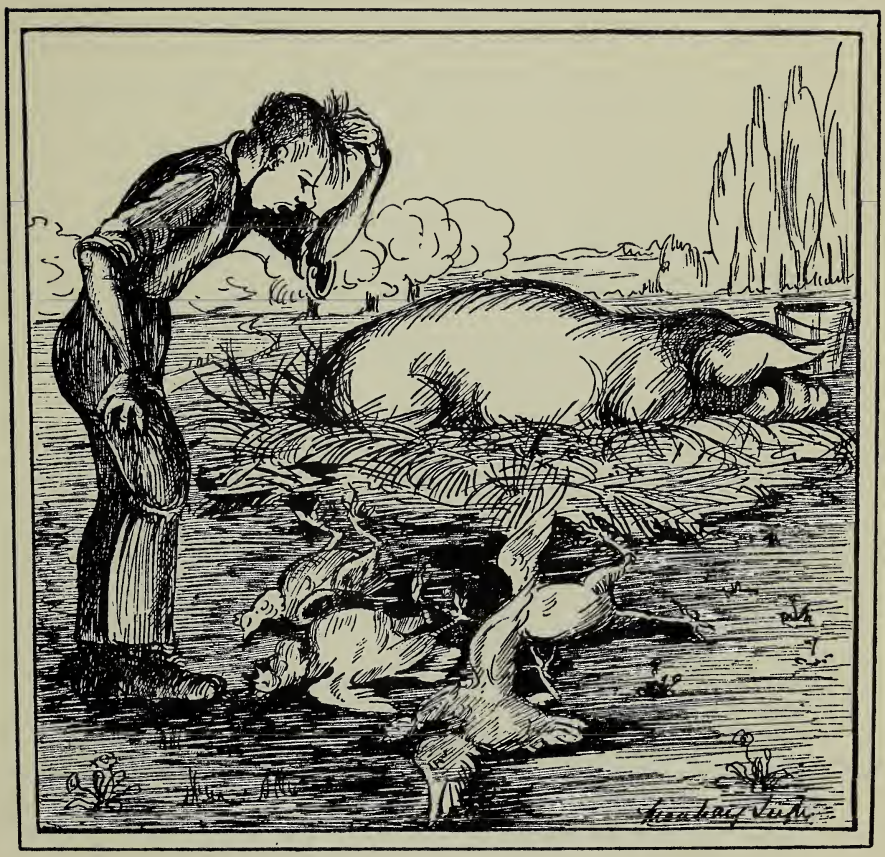
They shotte ye Hennes, ye Dukkes, ye Geese.

But when hys arme atte length was Tired
And quencht ye Anger of hys Hearte
He let them goe. Full paynfullie
They crepte unto a place aparte
Where, spurr'd by Lust of Blacke Revenge,
Did they devise a sure means howe
To compasse ye Destruction of
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

Privily to ye Henne-runne stole
Ye Boies, intente on evill Queste,
And cruellie did Catche and Slaye
Four Chykkenes, of ye Farmer's beste.
These, sadlie maul'd and stayn'd with Gules,
They took and scatter'd neare her Sloughe,
That Guilte myghte be imputed to
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

Pascoe ye Farme-hande plough'd near bye.
Unto hym thenne both Rascalles stole,
Showed hym ye Chykkenes, and with Lyes
Beguil'd ye Fellowe's simple Soule.
Hee look'd, hee spatte, hee scratcht hys Hedde,
"These be," ye Fellowe cryde, "I vowe,
Th' abhominable doings of
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe."

Needs bee that nexte ye Farmer see
The deed hys Beast (forsoothe) hadde done.
Hym Pascoe soughte, and showed hym alle.
Hys Face grew fierie as ye Sunne.
"Ryde to ye Butcher, knave," quoth hee,
"Unhansel Dobbyn from ye plough:
Translated unto Porke shall bee
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe!"



Hee look'd, hee spatte, hee scratcht hys Hedde.

O'er thys dread Deede we'll draw a Vayle:
Sufficeth that ye Deede was done:
And Storye weird bid now unfolde
To showe how strange ye Fates doe runne.
A fortnight later both ye Boies
—'Tis not for us to reason howe—
Partook of Sausages, mayde from
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.

Embeddyd in them were ye Shottes
Ye Boies did from ye Ayre-Gunne fyre.
Ye Shottes stuck in ye Boies' Insydes,
Afflyctynge them with Anguish dire.
They sykken'd. They grew worse. They dy'd;
And in ye Grave-Yarde lie they nowe.
Thus after Deathe avengéd was
Amelia, ye agéd Sowe.





